

Spring 1994

A thorn in the text: Shakerism and the marriage narrative

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Pugh, Robert Michael, Ph.D.

University of New Hampshire, 1994

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A THORN IN THE TEXT: SHAKERISM AND THE MARRIAGE NARRATIVE

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

May, 1994

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Robert Michael Pugh

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To my great-aunt
Mabel Pugh Thornton
(1891-1980),
whose loving support and generosity
have enabled two generations of my family to
"dig for knowledge."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

More people have contributed to the realization of this project than I can possibly mention here.

Special thanks, however, must go to Sister Ethel Hudson and Eldresses Bertha Lindsay and Gertrude Soule for their teaching and example of consecrated work;

to David Watters for his wise guidance and mentoring presence in directing this dissertation;

to Brigitte Bailey, Robert Mennel, Patrocinio Schweickart, and Sarah Sherman, for their support as my doctoral committee;

to Janet Aikins for her guidance throughout my doctoral studies;

to Susan Schibanoff and the members of the Dissertation Workshop for their assistance in shaping the project;

to Donald Duclos at William Paterson College, who encouraged my first research in this area;

to my friends and colleagues, past and present, at Canterbury Shaker Village, especially archivist Renee Fox, curator Charles 'Bud' Thompson, and chief tour guide Darryl Thompson, for their help and advice;

to Holley Gene Duffield of Central Michigan University for making many hard-to-find texts available to me;

to Maggie Stier of Fruitlands Museum for her advice on

Shirley Shaker materials;

to Martha Custer and Nora and Tony Nevin for providing space to spread my books out.

This dissertation could not have been written without the ongoing interest and support of the entire community of the University of New Hampshire at Manchester. I received encouragement from colleagues in every capacity. Librarians Judy Romein and Mary Jean Colburn set me up as resident scholar; Rose Grenon, Pat Charron, and Cinthia Gannett and Tim Finnegan led me past my initial anxieties over word processing; and Karla Vogel and her staff headed by Pam Otis established me in the computer laboratory, where most of the writing took place, and extended themselves ceaselessly and graciously on my behalf.

And loving thanks to my mother Marian Pugh for sustaining me at every stage of this endeavor.

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ABSTRACT

A THORN IN THE TEXT: SHAKERISM AND THE MARRIAGE NARRATIVE

by

Robert Michael Pugh
University of New Hampshire, May, 1994

Since 1824, fiction writers have attempted to treat the celibate communalist life of the American Shakers within narrative plot patterns that privilege marriage. The resulting stories and novels show Shakerism continually resisting this appropriation. Nevertheless, unable or unwilling to accept Shakerism's subversion of the necessary centrality of marriage, most of these writers have struggled to contain Shakerism's counter-structures of family and of narrative by reducing Shakerism's complexity. Shakerism, however, remains irreducible -- a thorn in the text.

This study focuses on fifteen fictions in which well-known and lesser-known writers try to bring Shakerism and marriage together.

The Preface summarizes the Shakers' history and evolving doctrine and considers issues of outsider interpretation.

The Introduction proposes theoretical perspectives in dialogism and constructions of sexuality -- from Joseph Allen Boone, David S. Reynolds, Mikhail Bakhtin, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Sally L. Kitch -- which can enable us to recognize Shaker celibate gospel union as an authentic family

commitment and to consider the novel genre as an apt vehicle for Shakerism's subversive and affirming potential.

Chapter I considers agendas of career authorship and republican motherhood that shape the Shaker stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne (1833) and Caroline Lee Hentz (1839).

Chapter II examines gothic treatments of Shakers in two popular romances (both 1848) and the novelized love story in Hervey Elkins's 1853 apostate account.

Chapter III explores strategies in two magazine romances (1872 and 1878) and a William Dean Howells novel (1880) that endorse the threatened conventional family by insisting on Shaker "otherness."

Chapter IV shows a more mature Howells realigning plots of Shakerism and marriage in three novels from the 1890s and beginning to recognize Shaker authenticity.

Chapter V discusses three fictions (1909-10) of Kate Douglas Wiggin, Howells, and Margaret Deland that register varying responses to the Shakers as supposedly becoming part of the past.

An Afterword touches upon more recent fictions and affirms Shakerism's continuing possibilities to expand our sense of family and of narrative.

May, 1994

PREFACE

SHAKER HISTORY, BELIEF, AND INTERPRETATION

As a tour guide at Canterbury Shaker Village in New Hampshire since 1984, I lead visitors through five restored buildings in ninety minutes: the 1792 Meeting House, where the worship services were held, often attended by crowds of visitors from what the Shakers called the 'world outside'; the Ministry Shop for housing the elders and eldresses, who were the spiritual leaders in each community; the Sisters' Shop, where the eldress witnessed the sisters' confession (the brothers confessing before the elder in another building) and the Shaker sisters spun and wove, and where they later manufactured the graceful Shaker cloaks for sale to the world; the Laundry building, begun in 1795, with its ingenious blend of Shaker and worldly technology; and the School House for the children who came to the Shakers with their parents, or those whom the Shakers adopted.

The three Shaker sisters I have known -- Eldress Gertrude Soule, Eldress Bertha Lindsay, and Sister Ethel Hudson -- are no longer present in person, but all three came to the Shakers as children (Eldress Bertha and Sister Ethel at Canterbury and Eldress Gertrude at Sabbathday Lake in Maine) and their stories of their Shaker childhoods have been incorporated into

the tour. Ending at the School House also provides a link with the beginning of the tour, back in the lane approaching the Meeting House, under maples over a hundred years old which were once cared for by the children. Each girl or boy had charge of a particular tree, and there is even a tradition that each tree was named after the child who watered it and held it straight to guide its growing. We do not know the trees' names anymore.

Throughout the tour, and especially at the end, visitors continue to express the same concerns as the writers whose stories and novels are featured in this study: Why did the Shakers have to be celibate? Didn't they know that married love is the best thing in the world? Wouldn't there be more Shakers now if they had married and had children and brought them up in the faith? And when it was such a beautiful life, with its peace and integrity and consecrated work, isn't it a shame that it has to die out?

In this study I examine the ways that authors from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have addressed these and other questions by writing fiction. This preface offers an account of the Shakers' history and doctrine and of some of the issues involved in interpreting their story. While this account does not pretend to be comprehensive, it anticipates commonly-asked questions about who the Shakers are -- I use the present tense because seven Shakers still live, work, and worship at Sabbathday Lake -- and what they have accomplished

and represented over the past two centuries. At the same time, this account speaks to facets of Shaker life which are appropriated in the fictions discussed in the upcoming chapters. These facets include the Shakers' working-class origins in eighteenth-century England; the combining of fact and legend in the characterization of their leader Mother Ann Lee (1736-1784); their establishment and expansion in America in the late 1700s and early 1800s; the consolidation of their structure, doctrine, and modes of worship under Ann Lee's successors; their communal regulation of space and time; the emotional, spiritual, and social significance of their celibate life and alternative communalist family structure; and possible explanations both for their decline in numbers and for the new growth of interest in them through their rich material culture.¹

¹ The Shakers have recorded their own history and explained their own evolving belief system in such texts as Benjamin Seth Youngs' (unsigned) Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing (1808); the Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations and Doctrines of Mother Ann Lee, and the Elders With Her (1816, 1827); John Dunlavy's The Manifesto: Or, a Declaration of the Doctrines and Practice of the Church of Christ (1818); A Summary View of the Millennial Church (1823); Aurelia Mace's The Aletheia (1880s); and Anna White and Leila S. Taylor's Shakerism Its Meaning and Message (1904).

Charles Nordhoff provides a useful and succinct outsider's history in his 139-page chapter on the Shakers in Communitistic Societies of the United States from Personal Observation (1875). Charles Edson Robinson provides a general history with a focus on the Canterbury community in The Shakers and Their Homes (1893). Twentieth-century histories of the Shakers include Marguerite Fellows Melcher's The Shaker Adventure (1941) and two books by Edward Deming Andrews, The People Called Shakers: A Search for the Perfect Society (1953, 1963) and Work and Worship: The Economic Order of the Shakers

The earliest recorded date for the Shakers is 1747, when a small sectarian group gathered in the dreary industrial town of Bolton-on-the-Moors near Manchester, England. At the center of the group was a couple who were tailors by profession, Jane and James Wardley; they may have been dissenting Quakers, and some of their beliefs and practices may have come from the French Prophets or Camisards who had emigrated to England earlier in the century.² The Wardley group drew attention for its millennial visions and prophecies, its fervent calls for repentance of sin, and its physical agitation during worship. While a meeting of the Wardley's society might begin in silent meditation such as the Quakers practiced, the members would often be seized with "a mighty shaking" or become "exercised in singing, shouting, or walking the floor, under the influence of spiritual signs" (Christ's Second Appearing xxv, qtd. in Andrews, People Called Shakers 6). By 1769 a report of their actions had even reached the colonial Virginia Gazette,

(with Faith Andrews, 1974).

Stephen J. Stein, in his comprehensive history The Shaker Experience in America (1991), seeks to balance what he sees as a sentimentalizing trend in interpretation of Shakerism by giving attention to disunities and complexities as well as accomplishments in Shaker history. Priscilla J. Brewer has taken a similar line while concentrating on the eastern societies in Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives (1986), and Jean McMahon Humez applies this revisionist perspective to her editions of Shaker writings, Gifts of Power: the Writings of Mother Rebecca Jackson, Black Visionary, Shaker Eldress (1981), and Mother's First-Born Daughters: Early Shaker Writings on Women and Religion (1993).

² Direct influence has not been established. See Desroche 23-27 and Stein 6. Manchester was also the scene of evangelical preaching by George Whitefield at this time.

from "Our correspondent in Manchester," telling how the group's "uncommon mode of worship" had "obtained" them "the name Shakers" (Morse 3).

In about 1758, the group was joined by a woman named Ann Lees or Lee, about twenty-two years old, daughter of a blacksmith named John Lees.³ One of eight children, Ann Lee was sent to work in a textile mill instead of to school, and never learned to read or write. According to the Shakers' own Testimonies⁴, she was "subject" from childhood to "religious impressions and divine manifestations" and had "a great abhorrence of the fleshly cohabitation of the sexes," to such a degree that she "often admonished her mother against it" (2). Louis J. Kern argues that Ann Lee may have had to reconcile a powerful sexual drive with fears of sexual violence and the pain of childbirth; her mother might even have died in childbirth while Ann was still at home⁵. Despite these complex feelings, she was married to a blacksmith, Abraham Stanley or Standerin, on 5 January 1762, and lost four children, three in infancy and one in early childhood.

She seems to have found increasing comfort in the Wardley society, however, through episodes of severe mental and

³ Shaker tradition dates her birth on 29 February 1736; her baptism is recorded for 1 June 1742. Her mother's given name has not survived, though she was known as a "very pious woman" (Testimonies 2).

⁴ See n1 for full title; for a discussion of this document as a historical source, see Stein 26-27 and 82

⁵ See Louis J. Kern, An Ordered Love 72.

physical suffering. She also assumed an increasingly important role in the society. The Testimonies date her "revelation" of the "lustful gratifications of the flesh" as the "source and foundation of all human depravity" as taking place about 1770 (5); her testimony that "no soul could follow Christ in the regeneration, while living in the works of natural generation" had "such sensible effect" on her listeners that she was "received and acknowledged" in the society as the female presentation of the Christ spirit, "the first spiritual Mother in Christ and the second heir of the Covenant of Life in the New Creation" (Testimonies 5-6).

Court records and constabulary accounts for 1772 and 1773 show Ann Lee and other Shakers being arrested, fined, and imprisoned for disturbing other congregations at worship and urging them to repent their sins and take up the cross against the flesh. One story which has passed into folklore has her being sustained through fourteen days in prison by the resourcefulness of a young convert, James Whittaker, who poured milk and wine down a pipestem through a hole in her cell door, and who later accompanied her to America and succeeded her in the leadership of the group. Stein, however, cautions against too much credence in such accounts, due to difficulties in documenting them from outside sources (446n15). Thus, while Shaker tradition attributes her decision to bring a group of followers to America to a "special revelation of God" (Testimonies 6), Stein attributes

it to prudence (7), based on "limited success" at gaining new members in Manchester, "growing pressures on the sect, and the "promise of different circumstances in North America" (7).

Ann Lee and eight followers, including her husband and her brother William Lee, came to New York in 1774. The group spent its first two years supporting themselves at whatever employment they could find, and during that time Ann's husband left them. In 1776, they were able to relocate to a tract of land at Niskeyuna, near Albany, which they proceeded to clear. In 1779, a wave of revivalist feeling in the area brought more responsive hearers to their messages of salvation through confession of all sin, separation from the world, and taking up the cross against the works of generation.

Their American ministry thus began in earnest in 1780, and Ann and William Lee, James Whittaker and some of their followers traveled back and forth through New England over a period of two years, preaching and gaining listeners and some converts. They were often attacked and severely beaten by mobs, however, as a consequence of exhorting celibacy and preaching the return of the Christ spirit in female form. In late 1780 they were also accused of collaboration with the British, with whom the colonies were still at war, and Ann Lee was imprisoned for a time in Poughkeepsie, during which, according to tradition, she continued to preach through the prison doors.

William Lee died at the settlement in Niskeyuna in July

1784, and Ann Lee two months later. They had not designed the communalist order or synthesized the formal doctrine that would go on to characterize the Shaker church; this work was undertaken by the leaders who followed them. James Whittaker began this systematizing operation during his ministry. He also increased the missionary effort in northern New England, and the first Shaker Meeting House, in New Lebanon, New York, was built in 1785 during his period of leadership.

The dual ministry of Joseph Meacham and Lucy Wright, both American-born converts, succeeded to the Shaker leadership when Whittaker died in 1787. Before Wright took over on Meacham's death in 1796, eleven Shaker communities were formally established in New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Maine.⁶ Under Meacham's direction, the Shaker physical rituals of worship which the public came to see evolved away from the random shaking and jumping and whirling of earlier times to a more choreographed and synchronized marching dance with symbolic steps and gestures. Meacham taught a dance actually called "Holy Order" or "Square Order Shuffle" to the Shakers which remained in practice for much of the century (Stein 48). A visitor to a Kentucky

⁶ The communities were Watervliet (1787-1938), formerly Niskeyuna, and New Lebanon (1787-1947) in New York, called Mount Lebanon after 1861; Hancock, Massachusetts (1790-1960); Enfield, Connecticut (1790-1917); Harvard, Massachusetts 1791-1918); Tyringham, Massachusetts (1792-1875); Canterbury, New Hampshire (1792-1992); Alfred, Maine (1793-1932); Enfield, New Hampshire (1793-1923); Shirley, Massachusetts (1793-1908); and Sabbathday Lake, Maine (1794 - still active).

worship service in 1810 recorded seeing "42 women formed in a Solid Column ranging each way, but facing toward a body of about the Same number of Men formed in like manner all Singing & Jumping with Very exact time & Step" (qtd. in Stein 101). This commentator called the ritual a "farce," however (Stein 102), reflecting the attitudes of many worldly visitors.

Under Wright's lead, the Shaker movement expanded into the western territories of Ohio and Indiana, again falling in with a wave of revivalist enthusiasm. Before Wright's death in 1821, two more societies were opened in New England, which turned out to be short-lived, as well as the West Union or Busro, Indiana, community which lasted from 1810 to 1827. Four longer-lasting communities were established in Kentucky and Ohio during her ministry. ⁷

⁷ The short-lived New England communities were at Gorham, Maine (1808-19), and Savoy, Massachusetts (1817-25). The longer-lasting ones were established in Ohio at Union Village (1806-1912) and Watervliet (1806-1900) and in Kentucky at Pleasant Hill (1806-1910) and at South Union (1807-1922). In the years following Mother Lucy's death, there were two more communities established, one at Whitewater, Ohio (1824-1916) and another at Sodus Bay, New York (1826-36) which was transferred to Groveland, New York (1836-95). Andrews records that the non-residential out-family in Philadelphia, organized in 1846 under the leadership of "Mother Rebecca" Jackson, moved to Watervliet, New York, but was revived in Philadelphia around 1860 (People Called Shakers 292). Andrews also lists other short-lived communities in Massachusetts and out-families in Massachusetts and New York (291-92). Two late nineteenth-century attempts in the South lasted only a few years: Narcoossee, Florida (1896-1911) and White Oak, Georgia (1898-1902). We see, then, that most of the organizing of Shaker societies into their distinctive and unified communalist pattern was accomplished under the supervision of Joseph Meacham and Lucy Wright.

Thus, the years from Ann Lee's death in 1784 to Lucy Wright's in 1821 saw an expansion of Shakerism's territory and a clarification of its hierarchical social order. The new Lead Ministry at New Lebanon was now composed of two women and two men, an arrangement that would continue through the century until declining numbers made it no longer feasible. The year 1821 also saw the codification of the Shakers' Millennial Laws, a move that Wright had resisted until near the end of her life, fearing, as Stein claims, the "inflexible application of a written code" (95). These laws, which were "Revised and re-established by the Ministry and Elders" in 1845, specified the organization of the society, from the Lead Ministry at New Lebanon to the elders and eldresses (spiritual leaders), deacons and deaconesses (in charge of domestic arrangements) and trustees (in charge of business concerns) of each community, and of each subdivision or Family within each community. They also set down procedures for such diverse matters as worship and confession, caring for the sick, behavior on the Sabbath and holidays, contact between the sexes, use of language, rising and retiring, behavior at meals, care of rooms and furniture, and regulations on reading and writing, on the schooling of children, on interaction with the world's people, and even on keeping pets and on the "Building, Painting, Varnishing, and the Manufacture of Articles for Sale, &c. &c." (qtd. in Andrews, People Called

Shakers 285) ⁸ Stein notes that while these laws still did not cover "all aspects of communitarian activity," the "guiding principles" to be understood and followed by all were "obedience to the ministry and love to others" (95). Besides regulating behavior and interaction, Stein points out, the Millennial Laws "defined the boundaries of Shakerism and the world, establishing clear lines of demarcation between the sect and the larger American culture, both in a literal and a symbolic fashion" (95).

The "Orders concerning Intercourse between the Sexes" are especially instructive. Men and women lived and worked in separate spaces, sleeping at opposite ends of the dwelling houses, entering and leaving buildings through separate gates and doors, going up and down separate staircases, eating at separate tables, facing each other at worship over a designated space. Brethren and sisters, as the laws set down, were not allowed to "have private talk together, at all, which they desire to have unknown to the Elders"; to "pass each other on the stairs"; to "shake hands together"; to "go into each other's apartments, after evening meeting at night, except on some very needful occasion" (qtd. in Andrews, People Called Shakers 266-67). The elaborateness of some of the rules -- "Sisters must not mend, nor set buttons on brethren's clothes, while they have them on" (267) -- suggests how far

⁸ These laws are reproduced in Andrews, People Called Shakers 243-89.

some brethren and sisters might have tried to stretch the rules if given the opportunity. However, there must have been some who found safety and affirmation in this structured rhythm of daily life.⁹

In addition to these orderings of space and proximity, the hours and tasks of a typical day were carefully regimented -- rising at 5:30 in the winter and 4:30 the rest of the year, with silent prayer, washing, and stripping of beds, followed by breakfast at 6:00, eaten in silence; work until the noon meal, then afternoon work till 6:00; silent prayer in each person's room from 7:30 to 8:00, followed by evening meeting, and curfew at 9:00 (Desroche 219-20, cited in McAdams 29). Evening meetings might be devoted to readings from the elders, practicing new songs and worship dances, or supervised conversation (Melcher 171, cited in McAdams 29). Tasks were sometimes rotated, on a monthly or seasonal basis, but this, according to Stein, was "never an end in itself among the Shakers, nor was it consistent practice in all societies"

⁹ These laws were revised and re-ordered in 1860, and regulations governing conduct and interaction were modified over time as numbers decreased and average age increased. Life in Shaker communities in the later nineteenth century and into the twentieth was more relaxed. After 1870, musical instruments were permitted, and the Canterbury society had its own band and choir that performed both religious and secular music. Eldress Bertha Lindsay, who came to the Canterbury community at the age of seven in 1905, recounted musical evenings and theatricals; the young people played lawn tennis, and the older ones played board games. There were outings to the beach and even to Boston to the opera, and the community had a good selection of classical records. Radios and television were eventually added to their amusements.

(155).

The basic "social, administrative, and economic unit" in each society was the family, usually containing between thirty and a hundred individuals. A community might have two or three or more families; Mount Lebanon, according to Charles Nordhoff, had 383 people in seven families in 1874 (256). Each family had its own elders and eldresses, deacons and deaconesses, and trustees, and lived in its own set of buildings. Families were distinguished by the degree of commitment to Shakerism. Those contemplating becoming Shakers would go first to the novitiate or gathering family, where they could stay with their worldly families and keep their property while being instructed in the Shaker faith; if they chose, they could then move on to gospel relation in the junior order, while maintaining some options over their property; to enter the senior order, they signed the Covenant and consecrated their worldly goods (Andrews, People Called Shakers 69). Thus, joining the Shakers meant passing through stages of commitment and reconfiguring one's sense of family, away from spousal and parental ties to fraternal and sororal ones. For a woman or man, it could mean entering into the brother-sister bond of gospel union with the person who had been one's husband or wife; for a child, it could mean replacing ties to biological parents and siblings with new ties to a group of other boys or girls and caretakers of the same sex. This, as we will see in Chapter Two, is what Hervey

Elkins did when he entered the Senior Order at the Enfield, New Hampshire community. Certainly, this transition could be difficult. However, one Shaker wrote in 1868 that

Here in this lovely valley you will find Fathers and mothers to caress you as all Mothers know how to, and Brothers and sisters that it fairly makes your heart beat with unusual velocity to even think of parting with [those] who appea[r] to be much engaged in their efforts to come up into a higher life. (qtd. in Stein 155)

Shaker doctrine remained open to the idea of continuous revelation, which recognizes that truth is not all revealed at once. This had been set down as early as 1790 in the Shakers' first published theological document, A Concise Statement of the Principles of the Only True Church, attributed to Joseph Meacham: "We do believe and do testify ... that the present display of the work and power of God, will increase until it is manifest to all" (Morse 62). This openness to revelation allows for flexibility and change in response to changing conditions in the society and the world. However, a basic core of Shaker beliefs has remained largely constant. These beliefs are summarized by Charles Nordhoff in the Shaker chapter of his Communitistic Societies of the United States from Personal Observations, published in 1875. They include:

(1) a dual father-mother God and an "eternal" distinction of the sexes, even in the angel and spirit worlds;

(2) a dual Christ spirit, male and female, which appeared first in Christ Jesus and then in Christ Ann (Lee), these Christ persons representing the male and female elements of

God, and accounting for the Shakers' name for themselves as the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, sometimes shortened to Believers;

(3) a four-cycle religious history of the human race, in which the first cycle ends with Noah and the flood, the second with the appearance of Jesus, the third with the appearance of Ann Lee as the second presentation of the Christ spirit, and the fourth, now in progress, the establishment of heaven on earth;

(4) a belief that the Millennium, the achievement of Christ's kingdom on earth, has begun, and dates from the establishment of their church, with the consequence that Shaker communities are to be heavens on earth in which people can lead consecrated, angelic lives;

(5) a belief that the Shakers have returned to the lost principles of the Pentecostal Church, which are common property, a celibate life, non-resistance, a "separate and distinct government" from that of the world (133), and -- the only principle not yet attained -- "power over physical disease" (133);

(6) a rejection of the Trinity and of bodily resurrection; a respect and love -- but not worship -- toward Jesus and Ann Lee as "elders of the Church" (134); ¹⁰

¹⁰ Eldress Gertrude Soule instructed me to tell my tours that Shakers do not restrict the presentation of the Christ spirit to Jesus and Ann Lee. She explained that they believe each person holds the potential for carrying the Christ spirit.

(7) a belief in a spirit world and gifts for communicating with spirits; the period from 1837 to about 1844 was a time of intense spiritualist activity in all the Shaker communities, when Believers received spirit messages, songs, and inspired drawings in abundance, and meetings were characterized by spirit visitations, speaking in tongues, and the receipt of spirit gifts; this phenomenon will be discussed in Chapter Two;

(8) a "perfectly stainless and sinless life" as the only one fit for a "true servant of God" (133); and

(9) a belief that the Shaker Church, the "Inner or Gospel Order," has its complement in the Outer Order; marriage and property are thus "emblems of the lower order of society" but not crimes or disorders, and those in the outer or lower order have the "opportunity of purification in the next world as well as here" (133).¹¹

Nordhoff concludes this summary by noting that in the "practical application of this religious life," the Shakers

inculcate a celibate life; 'honesty and integrity in all words and dealings;' 'humanity and kindness to friend and foe;' diligence in business; prudence, temperance, economy, frugality 'but not parsimony;' 'to keep clear of debt;' suitable education of children; a 'united interest in all things,' which means community of goods; suitable employment for all; and a provision for all in sickness, infirmity, and old age.' (134-35)

He also quotes a Union Village elder who told him that the

¹¹ In his summary, Nordhoff cites "Plain Talks upon Practical Religion" by George Albert Lomas, Novitiate Elder at Watervliet (1873).

Shakers would "'never change the fundamental principles and practices of Shakerism,'" and that "'Celibacy and the confession of sins are vital,'" but that "'in all else'" Shakers "'ought to be changeable, and may modify [their] practices'" (203).

Though the number of Shakers at any given time is difficult, if not impossible, to determine, Andrews cites the Western Reserve Historical Society's estimate that over 16,000 people were Shakers at some point in their lives (People Called Shakers 291); Priscilla Brewer gives an estimate of more than 20,000 (203). In 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, according to census figures compiled by Brewer, the eleven eastern communities had a combined population of 2060, down from 2249 in 1850 and 2427 in 1840 (216); Union Village and Pleasant Hill had a total of just over 300 (Andrews 291). Stein gives a total membership, eastern and western, of 3,627 for 1840 and 3,489 in 1860 (203).

The Kentucky Shakers suffered terribly in the Civil War, having their lands occupied and their resources commandeered by armies from both sides. After the war the decline in numbers in all the societies continued, precipitated by changes both inside and outside the order. Andrews cites reasons summarized by New Lebanon Elder Calvin Green as long ago as 1849 for some of the community's financial problems: the expense of educating children who did not stay; legal costs for favorable legislation and in apostate cases;

settling property on those who withdrew; taxes; and generosity to the poor. Andrews also cites acquisition of more land than could be prudently used; mismanagement of investments by some of the trustees; and in a growing national tendency to seek fulfillment in personal advancement rather than in communal living (People Called Shakers 226-29). Brewer attributes this reduction in numbers to such problems within the society as diminished commitment from members who came in as children but did not experience the same depth of conversion as earlier Believers, and to financial concerns in caring for an increasingly aging membership (203). Brewer also points to a waning of evangelistic fervor in the rest of the country after the 1840s, as well as increasing "[u]rbanization, industrial development, and westward expansion" (204). Stein sees a "mentality of old age" gaining ground among Shakers by 1900 (339). Stein also cites Canterbury Eldress Emma King's retrospective statements in the 1960s that the Shakers, like the world's people, had suffered financial losses due to wars and depressions in the twentieth century, and that worldly temptations had drawn more and more of their young people away (cited in Stein 363).

The first decades of the twentieth century saw one closing after another ¹². At the closing of Mount Lebanon in

¹² Shirley, Massachusetts closed in 1908; Pleasant Hill in 1910; Union Village in 1912; Enfield (Connecticut) in 1917; Harvard in 1918; South Union in 1922; Enfield (New Hampshire) in 1923; and Watervliet (New York) in 1938.

1947, the Lead Ministry was transferred to Hancock; it was transferred to Canterbury in 1958, and Hancock closed two years later. From 1960 to the death of Canterbury's last Shaker, Sister Ethel Hudson, in 1992, there were only two Shaker societies remaining. Now Sabbathday Lake, led by Sister Frances Carr and Brother Arnold Hadd, is the only active Shaker community. In a 1992 interview with the Chicago Tribune, Brother Arnold reported that the community had received over fifty letters and telephone calls in the previous year inquiring about membership. The most recent convert had joined them the year before, and the youngest member at that time was twenty-eight (2:10) ¹³

The numerical decline in Shaker populations and the closings of Shaker societies has been accompanied, however, by a growing interest in Shaker material culture. Shakers have long been known for their distinctive style of furniture, for their flat brooms, their oval boxes, garden seeds sold in bulk and individual packaging, medicinal herbs, applesauce, and a host of other items, including their own inventions and improvements on existing items. Ruth Ann McAdams has compiled a list of over 200 inventions and improvements attributed to the Shakers, including water-repellent fabric, cut nails, an improved washing machine, metal writing pens, a self-acting

¹³ For discussions of the different Shaker positions on reception of new members at Canterbury and Sabbathday Lake after 1965, see Newman and Stein 386-94 and 426.

cheese press, and a needle with its eye in the middle for use in making brooms (41-42n87). ¹⁴

Much of the current interest in Shaker material culture grew out of the research and writings of Edward Deming Andrews and Faith Andrews, who began collecting and studying Shaker artifacts in 1923. Meanwhile, Clara Endicott Sears had arranged for the Harvard Shakers' trustees' office to be moved to nearby Prospect Hill and incorporated into the Fruitlands Museum in 1920. John S. Williams organized his own collection into the Shaker Museum at Old Chatham, New York, in 1950. Canterbury and Sabbathday Lake had already been conducting tours of their own premises, and restorations at Hancock and Pleasant Hill began in the 1960s. Canterbury Shaker Village, deeded to a private corporation in 1969 to ease its transition to a museum, received 60,000 visitors in 1992.

The Shaker sisters I knew at Canterbury felt that the museum was an appropriate extending of their work into the future, beyond their days as a religious community. They saw the museum as a way of reminding the public that the Shakers have stood for a philosophy of life as well as for traditions of quality craftsmanship. In this regard, Sabbathday Lake Sister Mildred Barker's remark, "I almost expect to be remembered as a chair," (qtd. in Stein 355) is often quoted.

¹⁴ Sources for her list are Andrews, The Community Industries of the Shakers 42-44 and Work and Worship 153-59; Campion 179; Carmer 123; Desroche 225; Horgan 99; Melcher 134-35; Neal 42; and White and Taylor 310-314.

This concern needs to be kept in mind, particularly as the museum movement has both responded to and further engendered the public's fascination with the work of Shaker hands. Stein warns against the danger of what he calls the "Andrews synthesis" -- the appropriating of utilitarian objects as texts from which Shaker values -- simplicity, perfection, spirituality -- may be inferred. He cites Marjorie Procter-Smith on the iconization of Shaker objects ¹⁵: "Chairs and candle-stands," he asserts, "buckets and baskets, can be read like Rorschach ink blots -- any way you wish" (424). In projecting spiritual values on these items, he goes on, "we reveal as much about ourselves as we do about the makers of these objects" (424-25).

It may be that, as a museum guide, I have taken over some of the functions of the storytellers and novelists in this study who have interpreted the Shakers for a popular audience before the advent of the Shaker museum. What aspects of my own temperament, my own issues and agendas, my own degree of investment in the culture of my times, am I bringing to bear upon the objects I show, and upon the people who produced them? And where, amid all the interpretive issues and strategies of authorship, are the Shakers themselves? These questions give me a particular interest in considering what

¹⁵ Stein cites Marjorie Procter-Smith's 1987 paper "Artifact or Icon?" Procter-Smith examines this issue in terms of gender symbolism and invites inquiry into attributions of gender equality among the Shakers in Shakerism and Feminism and Women in Shaker Community and Worship.

personal, cultural, and historical factors may be at stake in this kind of interpretation, whether in the form of a story, a novel, or a guided tour.

INTRODUCTION

"TO COMPREHEND THE PLOT": SHAKERISM, MARRIAGE, AND THE NOVEL GENRE

The following book notice, which appeared in the Shaker Manifesto for September 1880, offers the metaphor which guides this study:

THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY has been sent to us, and proves to be an unworthy novel of a very talented man, W.H. Howells, editor of the Atlantic Monthly. The Undiscovered Country has reference to the spirit world, and the theme is a mixture of love story and ridicule of Spiritualism. If the writer does not find there is more truth in the simple, scientific facts taught by Spiritualism, 'than are dreamed of in his philosophy,' then we err in judgment. Just why this unfriendly Howells must drag the Shakers into so many of his stories, and presenting them in so ridiculous a light before the world, we cannot tell. But certain it is that in this story, as in 'A House of Entertainment,' Shakerism appears to be a thorn in his flesh. Courtesy compels us to return some kind of notice, but we cannot recommend the propriety nor the philosophy of the book. (207)

The Undiscovered Country offers its own figure of the thorn in the flesh on its second page. "'If I know there is a thorn,'" says a young man named Phillips, "'I can't help going and pressing my waistcoat against it'" (2). Phillips is a dilettantish collector of American bric-a-brac; he and his journalist friend Ford have come out of curiosity to attend a seance in a "'haggard old house, that's once been a home'" in

a decaying Boston neighborhood (2). Looking around them at the effusive but shabby decor, Phillips goes on to say, "'This parlor alone is poignant enough to afford me the most rapturous pain; it pierces my soul'" (2-3). The common usage of the thorn figure, however, goes back to the New Testament. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians (King James Version), the piercing thorn reminds him of his own mortality even in the midst of his visions: "And lest I be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations," he writes, "there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me" (2 Cor. 12:7).

For Howells, and for the other fiction writers in this study, Shakerism acted as a thorn in the flesh in both a worldly and a Biblical sense. It fascinated and repelled them. It enticed them, and it gave them painful contemplations. It held out a promise of heaven on earth, but it exacted a cost for this heaven -- celibacy and communalism -- that these writers and their readers were not prepared to pay. It proposed an alternative or counter-reality that they could neither embrace fully nor dismiss out of hand. In so doing, Shakerism has called and still calls upon writers and readers to examine and evaluate the conditions and aspirations of their own lives. Thus, Oscar W. Firkins's estimate of Howells's relation to the Shakers applies in varying degrees to the other writers in this study as well. For them, and for their readers, the Shakers have been, as they were to Howells,

"a lure, a torment, a solace, and a reproach" (94).

Firkins accounts for this effect on Howells by asserting that the Shakers "have defied one of his foremost instincts, the instinct of sex, and have fulfilled another equally powerful, the longing for fellowship in endeavor and equality in goods" (94). Some of the other writers in this study have found Shakerism more of a solace than a reproach. Some -- including this same "unfriendly Howells" at a later point in his career -- have been able to acknowledge authenticity in this celibate, communalist life choice which they would not make for themselves. Still, for all of them, this acknowledgement demands a sometimes painful recognition that the hegemony, if not the validity, of their own life narratives might be open to question. When the troubling implications of this demand on writer and reader surface in a novel or story, Shakerism becomes a thorn in the text.

In this study that focuses on fifteen novels and stories from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century, I propose that the transformation from thorn-in-the-flesh to thorn-in-the-text has occurred because non-Shaker writers and readers have tried to place Shakers in the traditional marriage narrative without recognizing what this appropriation involves -- an openness to Shakerism as an authentic narrative in its own right.

My use the term 'marriage narrative' draws upon Joseph Allen Boone's Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form

of Fiction. I am using the term to mean a collection of life plots, on and off the page, that presuppose the centrality of love and marriage in human experience, and that organize their formal movements around this centrality.¹ Because all the texts I consider here deal with Shakerism and marriage, the marriage narrative provides a locus for discussion of the Shaker life itself and of the uses these writers have made of Shaker life in fiction.

The most persistent temptation for fiction writers from the 'world outside' has been to use Shakers in a love story supporting the worldly ideal of marriage, and, by extension, of woman's constructed ideal role as wife and mother.² For

¹ As influential to his own studies of the love plot and its expanded consideration in feminist criticism, Boone's citations include E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (1927, 1954); Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (1966); Evelyn J. Hinz, "Hieronomy versus Wedlock: Types of Marriage Plots and Their Relationships to Genres of Prose Fiction" (1976); and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (1979). He also cites Nina Baym, Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and About Women in America, 1820-1870 (1978) and Jean E. Kennard, Victims of Convention (1978) (331-332n). Boone also acknowledges Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers (1985), which appeared after Tradition Counter Tradition was completed.

² In their article, "The Apostate Shakeress Heroine in Nineteenth-Century American Short Stories: From a Feminist Critical Perspective" (1992), Holley Gene Duffield and Pamela Gates-Duffield note that fictional Shaker sisters who apostasize are all "pretty girls who fall in love instantly and want to be married instantly and want to be a mother (probably instantly)"; they are never "plain" or "simply lustful," and they never leave "because of some well-pondered difference with the Society" (15).

example, a young couple falling in love in a Shaker village might be shown realizing and declaring their feelings for each other, escaping from their stern celibate authority figures, and going on to affirm the marriage bond in a happily-ever-after middle class home life. Or, a beautiful Shaker girl might be rescued from a celibate life by a good man from the world who will marry her, cherish her above all others, and give her a home of her own.

On the other hand, Shaker life carries the potential to subvert this same ideal, on and off the page, by providing a celibate, communalist alternative to companionate marriage, nuclear family, and private enterprise. This alternative may be disturbing, however, because, as Leonard Mendelsohn and others have pointed out, Shaker life embodies many principles that Americans claim to value -- religious commitment, labor-saving ingenuity, solid work habits, sound business management, -- and offers its members many of the benefits of adhering to such principles -- homes, work, companionship, prosperity, longevity, security, and hope of spiritual fulfillment here on earth as well as in the after-life. Nonetheless, the life requires difficult choices and sacrifices -- submission to authority, communal ownership of property, the relinquishing of marital and family ties.³

³ I heard Leonard Mendelsohn discuss this issue in a lecture, "They Came to Canterbury," part of a series of Shaker lectures at the Concord (New Hampshire) Public Library, May 1988.

Edward Deming Andrews asks "who can say what contribution

Thus, a writer from the world outside might see Shakerism as offering opportunities to create two kinds of texts, designated by David S. Reynolds in Beneath the American Renaissance as the literary text and the Conventional text (his capitalization). The literary text is "distinguished" by its "openness to the most subversive forces in its socioliterary environment" and also by its "simultaneous endeavor to lend depth and artistry to these forces" (563). If the literary text is to take shape, both "radical openness" and the "instinct to restructure" must be present: "The literary text fully confronts the subversive -- plunges wholly into it, as it were -- but at the same time removes itself through an assertion of the humanizing artistic imagination"

Shakerism made to a restless age of competitive individualism" as "examples of the extent to which man can subordinate self to the common good"? He goes on to say that while Shakerism's "aims were doubtless beyond its reach," the "spectacle of a devoted company daily committed to certain fundamentals of Christian living must have raised challenges and established standards of widespread import" (People Called Shakers, 239) and cites Hepworth Dixon's 1863 observation that Shakerism "would appear to be helping to shape and guide, in no slight and unseen measure, the spiritual career of the United States" (Dixon, New America 316, Andrews 338n). (The title of this Introduction comes from Dixon's book, see quote.) In Work and Worship, Andrews cites David M. Potter's assertion that the Shakers present "in manageable compass -- in microcosm -- all the elements of a full-blown culture" which "represented a deliberate alternative to the prevailing American culture, and therefore ... offers a perspective on American culture at large" (Andrews 7). Stein, however, striving to present a more comprehensive picture of Shakerism that includes its stresses and dissensions, talks about this relationship between Shakerism and the outside world in terms of the present-day "cultural embrace of the Shakers": "Fantasies about a society where peace and order prevail," he observes, "may help modern Americans cope with social realities" (425).

(563). Texts that do not confront the subversive may fall under the heading of "Conventional writings," which are "characterized" by their "evasion of the subversive" and by an "excess of reconstructive devices, which form a tight shield against disturbing cultural forces" (563).

Reynolds classifies "Conventional texts" as one type of "unfamiliar literature" (563) -- non-canonical, specific to their historical moment, and appearing in such disposable formats as newspapers, pamphlets, and popular magazines.⁴ Using his distinctions based on form, however, it would still be possible to find Conventional texts in hard-bound books and literary texts on flimsy sheets of paper. The texts in my study appeared in books, magazines, gift book annuals, illustrated newspapers, and even a high school publication. What makes some of them literary and some Conventional, and what places many of them somewhere in between these two designations, is the degree to which they can or cannot accommodate the subversive potential of Shakerism. The degree of accommodation depends on the writer's skill, agenda, and openness to alternative possibilities for structuring experience. It also depends on Shakerism's own capacity to pierce the writer's "tight shield" of "reconstructive devices"

⁴ The other two are Romantic Adventure texts, represented most often in "pamphlet novels" characterized by a "total escape into the episodic plot, with little attention to thematic resonance or moral suggestiveness", and Subversive texts, the "most irrational examples of dark reform, sensational literature, and grotesque humor" (563).

and assert itself in the text as a "disturbing cultural force" (563).

Joseph Allen Boone's study of the capacities of the novel genre offers valuable perspectives for considering these texts in terms of the subversive potential of Shakerism and the limitations of the marriage narrative. Boone identifies the three main versions of the canonical love plot: courtship, seduction, and wedlock (9)⁵ He then traces an eighteenth-into nineteenth-century shift in the "'signifying content'" of the marriage novel (5-6, citing Tony Tanner's Adultery in the Novel: Contrast and Transgression) away from the "alignment of the sexes in hierarchical patterns based on cultural assumptions of gender that are themselves powerfully ideological" (8), and on toward new alignments of the sexes that challenge some of those assumptions.⁶ These old hierarchical patterns have traditionally been promoted in love plots, where, Boone claims, "this sexual ideology has been most forcefully registered in the fictional idealization of the married state as the individual's one source of earthly happiness" (9). He goes on to point out the relation between

⁵ He goes on to explore courtship plots in Pride and Prejudice and Pamela, seduction plots in Clarissa and Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and wedlock plots in Fielding's Amelia and in A Modern Instance.

⁶ He is especially concerned with issues of gender; my study is focused on the related issue of the necessary centrality of marriage.

ideology and plot, saying that the "power of the fictional marriage tradition owes much of its ideological appeal to the manipulation of form" (9). This manipulation has traditionally focused on creating an "illusion of order and resolution" in plots of marriage, an illusion "that glosses over the contradictions ... concealed in the institution itself" (9).

However, as Boone demonstrates, the novel genre has moved on in the past two centuries from promoting the ideal of companionate marriage to questioning this ideal, and to finding new forms appropriate to this task.⁷ For example, he

⁷ I am using the term "companionate marriage" more broadly than Boone does, to mean a monogamous, heterosexual, romantically exclusive, legally documented and socially sanctioned union entrusted by mainstream society with maintaining order and stability.

Boone works from Lawrence Stone's use of the term "companionate marriage" in The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 (1977) (282) to "encompass the developing social vision of wedlock as a union of friends" which was gaining ground after the 1660s in England and its American colonies (Boone 59), and traces changes in the conduct, though not the centrality, of the relationship as romantic love began to assume an increasingly prominent role.

In their book Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America (1988), John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman report that the phrase was coined in 1927 to accommodate a view of marriage synthesized in Ben Lindsay and Wainwright Evans's book, The Companionate Marriage, in which both men and women "sought happiness and personal satisfaction in their mates," including "mutual sexual enjoyment" (266). It was offered as a twentieth-century, post-women's-suffrage concept and included recognition of new assumptions, including the strengths and nature of women's sexual drives, the "healthiness of sexual expression apart from procreative functions," the recognition of pre-marital sexual activity, and easier divorces when children were not involved (266). However, D'Emilio and Freedman acknowledge that "some of these features had antecedents in nineteenth-century ideals," and their book chronicles the changing status of these issues as they emerged and gained ascendancy through the previous century.

shows that in Moby Dick and Huckleberry Finn, the "movement of the quest forces an emphatic rejection of the narrative stability and fortuitous merging of plot lines associated with much nineteenth-century fiction and with the love plot in particular" (241). In the more circular, accretively structured novels of such writers as Elizabeth Gaskell, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, he identifies and explores "fictional worlds of female community" as "counter-traditional testimony to the struggle to subvert the ideological values of the novelistic tradition by overturning its form" (287).

Central to my study of Shakerism and the marriage narrative is Boone's assertion that the "movement toward stasis" in the three canonical love plots -- courtship, seduction, and wedlock, "be the resolution comedic or tragic," has nevertheless "functioned to preclude, by repressing from the audience's overt consciousness, any serious dismantling of the social order, the ideological grounds underlying the physical construct" (8). Shakerism, however, has the potential to dismantle both the social order and the marriage narrative by offering celibacy and communalism as additional competing plots. In the nineteenth century, more people found these additional plots inviting as life choices than do today; however, this offer of alternatives still can and does affect the ways we may think about our world. The Shaker plots of celibacy and communalism offer not only a "lure, a torment,

a solace, and a reproach," but also a counter-traditional testimony of their own. As we will see in the fictions in this study, this Shaker counter-traditional testimony has the capacity to disrupt the [C]onventional narrative and may also lead to formal alternatives in narrative movement and closure.

Boone and Reynolds both draw upon the novel criticism of Mikhail Bakhtin, who identifies the major attribute of the novel, and "artistic prose in general," as an orchestrated multiplicity of voices, or heteroglossia. This multi-voiced quality is able to enter the novel through such "compositional unities" as "[a]uthorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, [and] the speeches of characters" (Discourse in the Novel 263). Each of these speeches and genres within an artistic text "permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and relationships" (263). These various voices and the various links among them within the texts are "always more or less dialogized" -- that is, existing in tension and interplay rather than in dialectical or polarized opposition.⁸

⁸ Boone cites Bakhtin in his discussion of the ways that "ideological structures" -- especially the marriage narrative -- "work to create the appearance of a unitary, coherent world view by eliding the multiple social contradictions -- in Bakhtin's terms, the heteroglossia of everyday life -- that would challenge their dominance and power" (7). Particularly helpful to this study is Boone's assertion that the novel, as "a genre existing on the boundaries of contemporaneity, in Bakhtin's phrase, and engendered from the multiple intersections of felt realities and produced ideologies," has "inevitably centered on that most 'lived' of human experiences, those erotic bonds with others that in a profound sense confirm our sense of personal identity while

The novel, and the story as artistic prose fiction, can thus be defined as "a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized" (262). The principle of a novel or novelistic story's aesthetic organization is this dialogical orchestrating (263) of "all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it," by means of this heteroglossic interplay (263).

A novelistic Shaker fiction in Bakhtin's terms, then, like a text that meets Reynolds's definition of "literary," would have to be open to Shakerism's plots and voices as well as to those of the world outside. What Bakhtin would call the centrifugal force of these varied and sometimes subversive voices would then come into play and tension with an orchestrating movement, or centripetal force, of what Bakhtin calls a "unitary language" and Reynolds sees as a restructuring instinct guided by a humanizing artistic imagination. In a Shaker fiction, the voices in centrifugal

constructing the very terms by which we (mis)perceive reality, self, and others" (27). I explore these fictions on Shaker themes as engendered from these intersections.

Reynolds cites Bakhtin's suggestion that "complex literature can emerge only when a culture is suddenly deprived of its naive absence of conflict, when moral systems are recognized as relative rather than unitary" (Reynolds 56). The Shaker-theme fictions I am situating as relatively complex and therefore "literary" rather than "Conventional" are ones which are not seeking to return to this naive absence by reconstructing Shakerism without its subversive qualities.

movement would include actual Shaker speech usages, rhythms, allusions, inserted genres (spiritual narratives, hymns, and sermons) and referents (the King James Bible, works of Shaker theology), as well as voices from the world outside.⁹ To sustain the text's novel or literary quality, the "unitary language" or guiding, restructuring instinct would need to be informed by some acknowledgement that Shaker life has its own authenticity, whether or not the particular fiction promotes that life over another.

However, as Bakhtin scholar and translator Michael Holquist explains, we "see the world by authoring it, by making sense of it through the activity of turning it into a text, by translating it into finalizing schemes that order its potential chaos" (84). A non-Shaker "author," then, whether that author is a writer, reader, or tourist, is seeking through these "finalizing schemes" -- which may include versions of the marriage narrative -- to achieve what Bakhtin calls a "determinate and stable image" of Shakerism (Author and Hero 6). However, the price we pay as authors for each act of translation or finalization we perform, Holquist goes on, is a reduction in "the world's variety and endlessness" (84). And even though the novelistic genre is "the body of utterances that is the least reductive of variety" (84), some schemes may claim ascendancy over others.

⁹ Sasson discusses the presence of worldly forms in Shaker writing.

Thus, the "instinct to restructure" (Reynolds 563) -- or to finalize, or to author (Holquist 84) -- the part of one's world which includes Shakerism may lead an author (or authoring consciousness) to resist Shakerism's subversive, counter-traditional testimony, even though Bakhtin's novelistic genre and Reynolds's literary text are formally able to incorporate this testimony in meaningful tension. When this resistance happens, what Reynolds calls the "excess of reconstructive devices" operates to oppose the text's incorporation of Shakerism's authenticity and subversive potential as a counter-force to the author's other finalizing schemes. The author's "reconstructive devices" or strategies (Reynolds), are mobilized to extract the thorn -- Shakerism's disturbing potential, its counter-traditional testimony -- from the textual body.

What prompts this mobilizing of "reconstructive devices" or strategies? To understand what is at stake for an author in the process of applying the world's "finalizing schemes" to Shakerism, we may consider two instances in which Shaker counter-testimony to worldly institutions may have been particularly disconcerting to the nineteenth-century world.

Both these instances of counter-testimony create a disturbing sense of likeness-in-difference between Shaker life and worldly life, because both involve Shaker literalizing and re-investing of worldly metaphors: Shaker spatial arrangements as counter-testimony to the world's "separate spheres," and

Shaker celibacy as counter-testimony to worldly marriage.

In both these instances, Shaker life may be seen to be "parodic", in Bakhtin's sense, of life in the world (Discourse 273). According to Bakhtin, the juxtaposing of authoritative and marginalized voices in heteroglossia becomes a parodic commentary "aimed sharply and polemically at the official languages of its given time" (273). This use of "parodic" does not mean that Shaker life makes fun of worldly life and the power structures that comprise it, but rather that it reveals worldly life to itself in new ways by proposing a counter-reality that is both like worldly life and different from it.

In the first instance, guests and tourists going through Shaker villages in the ante-bellum years might have noted, at least subliminally, that the gendered spatial arrangements of Shaker communities both differed from and resembled the "separate-spheres" orientation in the world outside.¹⁰ Worldly men, according to this orientation, were expected to fulfill themselves in careers away from home, while worldly women fulfilled themselves by making their dwellings into heavens on earth for their men to come home to.

For Shaker men and women, however, the separation of spheres was both literal and metaphorical. Shaker men and women actually lived and worked in spaces separate from each

¹⁰ For discussions of the "separate spheres" orientation, see Cott; Ryan; Welter; and Habegger.

other. Nevertheless, as Sally L. Kitch points out, since the whole community was the work-site as well as the home, Shakers did not consider work-space as distinct from home-space (90-91). The Shaker separation of spheres was thus both a literalization of separateness and a re-symbolizing of unity. The worldly woman was categorized as the "angel in the house" by Coventry Patmore's immensely popular poem ¹¹. However, since Shakerism aspires to the angelic life for all its members, all Shakers, both men and women, were angels, in the shop and field as well as in the house.

The separation of spaces by gender also assisted in a reconfiguring on Shaker ground of earthly and heavenly space, as Dolores Hayden explains in her analysis of Hancock Shaker Village as a planned utopian community. Hayden quotes David Lamson's 1848 apostate account, which reports that when grouped men and grouped women face each other in Shaker worship in a hall of one of the dwellings, the "space between these two bodies is called the altar. Or, there is an imaginary, or spiritual altar in this space" (52-53, qtd. in Hayden, Seven American Utopias 71). Hayden sees this altar as providing the "crucial transition between the earthly space of the dwelling axis on which it rests and the heavenly,

¹¹ The poem was published in 1856 and reprinted many times throughout the nineteenth century. Bennet John Lossing appended a verse from it at the end of his article on the Shakers at New Lebanon for Harper's in 1857, proclaiming (in evident contrast to his praise of the celibate Shakers) that the "'vestal flame'" is not "'quenched'" by marriage, but "'burns the higher'" (Gifford 58).

imaginary space" brought within that dwelling.¹²

Whether or not worldly visitors understood the interpenetration of heavenly and earthly space, this Shaker literalization and re-investment of the separate-spheres metaphor may have been disconcerting to them for another reason besides its physical separation of the sexes. American marriage at mid-nineteenth century was experiencing what Alfred Habegger calls a "dreadful double-bind":

The less interest men took in their homes, the more domestic the wives had to become. And the more dutifully the wives tried to make their homes the heavens on earth they were supposed to be, the more alienated became the husbands. (31)

The result was that "instead of creating a single coherent culture" in which they could complement each other, men and women in the world "tended to create two separate nations, male and female" (31). Amid all this tension, popular magazine articles in the 1850s decried the passing of the happy family

¹² Hayden's fascinating spatial analysis of a Shaker community includes a discussion of the distribution of buildings, the arrangement of walks and paths at right angles, and the release achieved during worship through restructuring of boundaries between heavenly and earthly space as Shakers danced in new formations and enacted, in pantomime, their receipt of gifts -- including rare fruits and delicacies, spiritual garments, boxes of treasures, and cups of blessing. The Shakers as "master builders" of communities, Hayden asserts, were able to manipulate "their converts' perception of personal space and spheres of movement in order to simulate experience of dual spheres" heavenly and earthly (69). Hayden also cites Charles Nordhoff's account of hearing that a "magnificent spiritual city, densely inhabited, and filled with palaces and fine residences, lies upon their domain, and at but a little distance from the Church family" (Hayden 68, Nordhoff 251). Nordhoff also reports that an eldress told him of visits from the spirits of an Indian tribe that used to live in the area (251).

(cited in Habegger 27).

Thus, visitors seeing Shakers going about their lives and their work in separate gendered spaces may not have understood that, beyond the very practical concern of enforcing the celibacy, the symbolic purpose for this separation was to create another kind of union. Even so, many of them knew that the world's arrangement of separate spheres was no longer making people happy, if it ever had.

In the same way that the union-in-separateness of Shaker spatial arrangement was thus both a literalizing and a re-symbolizing of the world's separate-spheres metaphor, Shaker celibacy, as Kitch explains, involves a literalization and a re-investing of metaphors of spiritual union (113). Louis J. Kern's account of the Shakers' theological background for their celibacy cites Harvey Eads's nineteenth-century sermon comparing the Shakers' "taking up the cross" against sexual desire to Paul's "circumcision of the heart but not the body" in Romans ii:29 (Kern, An Ordered Love 79). Applied to the heart, the circumcision image is a way of portraying the chastening of the body as a step toward creating a church of "spiritual but not physical eunuchs" (Kern 79) -- believers who had cut themselves off from their sexuality in order to attain an alternative spiritual union with each other in Christ. Shakerism, however, exacts not only the physical separation of the sexes but the adoption of a literally continent life -- not a surgically performed genital

curtailment but a severe sexual circumscribing nonetheless. In an 1868 Shaker pamphlet, we see that the Shakers knew what dismay their interpretation of this metaphor was causing among the world's people. "The moment a life of continence is assumed from a religious motive," the author R.J. Pelham observes, "when a man makes himself a eunuch for the inner life, 'for the kingdom of heaven's sake, then all Christendom is in distress for fear the world will come to an end" (2).

But, as Kitch points out, Shaker celibacy is both a literal denial of the flesh, through spatial separation and physical abstinence, and an affirming new symbolism of union. For the Shakers, Kitch explains, "celibacy signifies an end to the possessiveness and jealousies of sexual culture and ushers in a spiritual era, a New Earth in which genuine unity is possible" (92-93). She goes on to cite Elder Frederick Evans, who wrote in 1853 that it was

the principle of virgin purity that enabled Jesus Christ and his Apostles to have all things in common. ... Virgin purity is the root of all religious communion because sexual relations confine the love principle to a small circle of which self is the centre. (qtd.in Kitch 92-93)

Considered as a value rather than as a behavior, then, celibacy, as Kitch goes on to say, "undermines the need for symbolic differences between male and female, even though it requires the separation of men and women," and "eliminates the need for symbolic differences between home and work, nature and culture, and other symbolic pairs" (112). Of course, this view of celibacy does not mean that there were no feelings of

jealousy or possessiveness in Shaker communities, or that Shakers have always practiced full equality of the sexes, or that gender roles and stereotypes have not limited the experiences of women in Shaker communities as well as in the world.¹³ However, when celibacy is recognized as not only a literally counter-sexual behavior but also a symbolic re-commitment, it does carry a potential for what Kitch sees as a positive and creative "merging of gender symbolisms" (113).

Thus, a celibate commitment to a community can be not merely an alternative to marriage, but also an alternative marriage -- or, in Boone's sense, a counter-marriage. Shaker celibacy has served as counter-marriage in different ways since its origins in England: Jane Wardley and her husband James shared a bed but did not touch each other "any more than two babes" (Daniel Wood in Testimonies, 1888 ed., 38); Ann Lee called herself the bride of Christ, and remained in celibate union with her husband until he left her after fourteen years of marriage; and Sister Ethel Hudson, the last Shaker at Canterbury, used to say, "I married my church."

Although visitors might not have known it, the language of the Covenant and Constitution of the Church at Hancock,

¹³ "In fact," notes Nordhoff, "while [the Shakers] call men and women equally to the rulership, they very sensibly hold that in general life the woman's work is in the house, the man's out of doors; and there is no offer to confuse the two" (166). For additional perspectives on this issue, see Procter-Smith; Lawrence Foster; and several of the selections in Chmielewski et al., especially Gooden, Nickless and Nickless, and Brewer, "'Tho' of the Weaker Sex.'"

which new members signed when they were "duly prepared" and committed to become Shakers, has echoes of the marriage service, inviting a counter-marriage rather than an anti-marriage reading. New members, this document states, had to be willing to "sacrifice all other relations for this sacred one" and "consecrate themselves, and all they possess, to the service of God forever" (20); they agreed not to reclaim private property or to exact payment for services, "in the presence of God, and before these Witnesses" (30). The individual shaking which evolved into the communal Shaker dance and Mother Ann's injunction to put "hands to work and hearts to God" might also be read as counter-testimony to the Anglican marriage vow, "With my body I thee worship." The Shaker Covenant vows unite the individual with the community, making total separation from sex an act of consummation.¹⁴

These are only two examples of Shakerism's literalization and re-investment of metaphor into new symbolic values and its likeness-in-difference to life in the world. They show the Shakers giving the world back its own orientations -- space and gender -- and its own metaphors -- separate spheres, the circumcised heart, union through marriage -- in new form. Both examples are related to gender roles and sexuality, and both provide counter-traditional testimony to the subversive

¹⁴ As we will see in Chapter Two, Nathaniel Hawthorne tries to turn these tables yet again in his appropriation of Shakerism for a sterile parody of the wedding service in "The Shaker Bridal."

potential in Shakerism which some authors have incorporated and others have sought to evade.

The twentieth century historian of sexuality, Michel Foucault, does not include celibacy among the forms which the nineteenth century's "transformation of sex into discourse" sought to "expel from reality" (1:36). He does claim, however, that one feature of this transformation was the defining of a "norm of sexual development", so that all "possible deviations" could now be "carefully described" (36). This new proliferation of sex-invested language gave "moralists" and "especially doctors" a "whole emphatic vocabulary of abomination" (36) to bestow on sexualities that did not conform to what Foucault sees as Western society's "one basic concern": to "ensure population, to reproduce labor capacity, to perpetuate the form of social relations: in short, to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative" (36-37).

The focus of this "discursive explosion," Foucault continues, was away from the heterosexual monogamous married couple, with its "regular sexuality," and toward the sexuality of marginalized groups -- "children, mad men and women, criminals, ... those who did not like the opposite sex" -- and toward "reveries, obsessions, petty manias, or great transports of rage" (38-39). These "peripheral sexualities" were the new subjects of discourse (39).

As a sexual characteristic and value that contributed to

marginalizing a group, however, Shaker celibacy may well constitute one of those peripheral sexualities which, according to Foucault, the nineteenth century thrust into discourse. If this is so, then the novels and stories in this study become productions of this discursive transformation.

¹⁵ For these productions to do justice both to Shakerism and to the requirements of the novel/literary text, however, they must still be able to accommodate Shaker celibacy as an authentic counter-traditional sexual value.

For this reason, the work of critics in gender studies and gay and lesbian studies offers useful perspectives for considering these texts. Jonathan Dollimore, for example, notes that "an older view of homosexuality as a behavior survives within the newer account of it as an identity" (41). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that, "[in] principle, any male-centered text is likely to be about homosocial/homosexual object choices, and in this way about relations of patriarchal power" (31). Carroll Smith-Rosenberg posits a "wide latitude of emotions and sexual feelings" operant in the nineteenth century, in the midst of the "supposedly repressive ... sexual ethos" (76). True, she does not include celibacy within her continuum from "committed heterosexuality" to "uncompromising homosexuality" (76), but her approach invites a consideration of that extended possibility. And Judith Butler cautions

¹⁵ For a twentieth-century application of lay scientific discourse to Shaker celibacy, see Schroeder; for an assessment of Schroeder's contribution, see Morey.

against defining authenticity in terms of the 'natural,' proposing that sexual desires as well as sexual behaviors may be socially constructed; she proposes the imagining of "alternatively gendered worlds" (ix).

To consider homosexuality and Shaker celibacy as two sexual identities both marginalized by mainstream culture and engaged in issues of authenticity is not to suggest that homosexual behavior occurred in Shaker communities. Nathaniel Hawthorne may have suspected homosexual conduct, or at least of the possibility for it, when he visited Hancock Shaker Village in 1851. He was told that each of the narrow beds he saw in the Dwelling House was shared by two brothers, and he proceeded to write in his journal that what he saw as the Shakers' "utter and systematic lack of privacy," the "close function of man with man," and the "supervision of one man over another" was "hateful and disgusting to think of"; he went on to say that "the sooner the sect is extinct the better, a consummation which, I am happy to hear, is thought not to be a great many years distant" (American Notebooks, in Morse 193). Stephen Stein, however, notes that Shakers had "strong prohibitions against homosexuality," though "Overt expressions of love and affection were commonplace among male Shakers" (155). And, as Gloria Erlich points out, Hawthorne's reaction on this occasion may be colored by having had to share a bed for many years with his uncle in the crowded house

where he grew up.¹⁶

Alice Walker addresses the issue of same-sex love and Shaker celibacy in her warmly complimentary review of Gifts of Power: the Writings of Rebecca Jackson, when she questions only one point in Jean McMahon Humez's "splendid and thorough" introduction (79). Discussing Jackson's relationship with a younger woman, Rebecca Perot, which lasted some thirty years and ended only with Jackson's death, Humez speculates, "'Perhaps, had she been born in the modern age, she would have been an open lesbian'" (79). Walker questions "a nonblack scholar's attempt to label something lesbian that the black woman in question has not" (80), and goes on to ask a number of questions, including how "lesbianism" is defined in this context, and whether "whatever they did alone together" might "infringe on their notion of celibacy" (80). Walker makes a connection vital to this study when she affirms that "the name [Jackson and Perot] did accept, and embrace, which caused them so much suffering and abuse, was celibate. Of course, celibates, like lesbians, have a hard time proving they exist" (81). Perspectives from gay theory thus have the potential to make critical and interpretive use of this concern which already figures in some outsider responses to Shaker

¹⁶ For further discussion of Hawthorne's crowded homelife before his marriage, see Baym, "Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Mother"; Gollin sees Hawthorne at Hancock in 1851 reacting to his own youthful naivete when he first visited Canterbury in 1831, before his own utopian venture at Brook Farm ("Hawthorne Contemplates the Shakers" 63).

celibacy.¹⁷

I hope that this study of non-Shaker fictions about Shakers will provide some answer as to why the existence of celibacy as an authentic life choice remains so hard to prove, even to many sympathetic outsiders today. I propose that part of the answer lies in our own investment in the narrative forms, finalizing schemes, and reconstructive devices we use as we struggle to shape stable images of our world.

To this end, in the remaining chapters I examine different writers' uses of five "reconstructive devices" or "textual strategies" as they try to appropriate Shakerism for fiction within the marriage narrative: authoring the Shakers by seeking to situate their narratives of celibacy and communalism among already established genres; gothicizing, the particular authoring that reads the Shakers through the formal elements of the gothic novel; domestic "othering," or making the Shaker Family "other"; realigning Shaker plots and traditional love plots in new combinations that seek to employ Shakerism's subversive potential rather than to contain and negate it; and consigning the Shakers to a past from which they pose no further subversive threat to present institutions and narratives. These strategies are inter-related, and all of them involve placing the Shakers at some remove from author and reader. More than one strategy is usually in evidence in

¹⁷ See Rich on the forced non-existence of the "lesbian possibility" (248).

a given story or novel, but I will focus on the ones that appear to dominate each text.

Thus, in Chapter One, I present Nathaniel Hawthorne and Caroline Lee Hentz subsuming Shakerism to agendas of career authorship in the 1830s. I show how Hawthorne deliberately distances himself and his readers from Shakerism in his tales "The Canterbury Pilgrims" (1833) through his use of authorial interjection and inserted genres, in order to endorse traditional marriage and justify his own career choice as an artist in a new republic. I then show Hentz in her story "The Shaker Girl" (1839) employing reconstructive strategies similar to those Hawthorne uses to appropriate Shakerism, but for her own more inclusive writing agenda, as a republican mother and Northerner-turned-Southerner committed to resolving regional differences in the national family. I present both authors' appropriations of Shakerism in the context of the uncertainties prevailing in their times concerning narratives of marriage and career. Bringing these two authors together helps suggest the range of concerns which directed Americans -- even those not engaged in writing fiction for money -- in their own processes of authoring the Shakers.

In Chapter Two, I discuss the role of certain elements from the tradition of gothic fiction which helped shape the ways that Americans were invited to read the Shakers. I use Hawthorne's "The Shaker Bridal" (1838) as a bridge between considerations of the career narrative and the gothic tale. I

then go on to focus on gothic elements in two short stories, both published in 1848, and in a love narrative, supposedly based on a real incident, from an apostate account published in 1853. The two stories are the anonymous "The Shakeress," from the parlor annual Moss Rose, and Daniel Pierce Thompson's "The Shaker Lovers," which appeared in a collection of his stories and was later produced in Boston as a one-act play, complete with staged Shaker dancing. The love narrative is from Hervey Elkins's Fifteen Years in the Senior Order of Shakers; A Narration of Facts, Concerning that Singular People. Gothic elements applied to Shakerism in these texts include the victimization of young girls by evil and corrupt authority figures; hints of corruptions and abuses in religion's name, reminiscent of the Spanish Inquisition; the use of atmosphere to mirror characters' internal states and to generate suspense; sudden, mysterious departures as a plot feature; and the presence of ghosts and spirits, sometimes but not always explainable in real-life terms. I also discuss nineteenth-century apostate accounts and features of Shaker life itself as among the factors contributing to this gothicizing of the Shakers, and I refer briefly to other texts over a fifty-year period (1824-73) in which in which the practice is evident.

In Chapter Three, I use William Dean Howells's Atlantic Monthly article "A Shaker Village" (1876) to introduce three fictions which seek to contain Shakerism in order to endorse

the marriage narrative and to enact a nostalgic impulse toward earlier socioliterary constructs of 'home' and 'mother.' The fictions I go on to discuss are Mrs. E.B. Raffensperger's "Shaker John" (1872), Horace Elisha Scudder's "A House of Entertainment" (1878), and Howells's novel The Undiscovered Country, first serialized in the Atlantic and then published in book form in 1880. This process of containment requires these authors to make Shakerism "other" in a domestic sense -- to make Shaker Family arrangements into non-families rather than alternative or counter-families, and to dispose of Shaker homes by emptying them out and even burning them down. I present this worldly narrative practice, and the problems it encounters, in connection with developments inside the Shaker movement -- declining numbers, aging populations, and the influence of the same acquisitive "impulse of the age" Howells was noting in the world outside.

In Chapter Four, I discuss three Howells fictions from the 1890s which show him realigning worldly love stories and Shaker plots, and using the Shakers to create new relationships between love themes and fictional genres. I show how Howells makes Shakerism a subplot in The World of Chance (1893) and separates it from the novel's love plot, which is actually a plot of disengagement rather than courtship. I then consider Howells's exploration of Shakerism as counter-traditional testimony to marriage in two novellas, A Parting and a Meeting and The Day of Their Wedding, both published in

1895. Both these novellas begin with a couple planning marriage; both couples are disengaged through the action of Shakerism upon them. All three fictions in this chapter show an author at last making use of Shakerism's potential to rewrite the marriage narrative and, at the same time, to suggest new possibilities for the formal practice of love fiction.

And in Chapter Five, I treat three novels of the early 1900s, when the Shakers were being perceived as remnants of a passing way of life. I discuss Kate Douglas Wiggin's 1909 novel Susanna and Sue as both an endorsement of the outside world's marriage narrative and an affectionate picture album of Shakerism -- one that sets out to capture portraits and vignettes of a world already distant in space and time. I also consider Howells's last Shaker novel, originally called The Children of the Summer, a work in progress in 1909-1910 which was published posthumously in 1920 as The Vacation of the Kelwyns: An Idyl of the Middle Eighteen-Seventies. Here the Shakers are presented as elderly and benign, though still capable by their example of raising questions of values and priorities among the world's people. The fiction that closes the chapter, Margaret Deland's 1910 novella The Way to Peace, once more portrays the Shakers as few and aging, but still holding onto their power to subvert worldly assumptions, including the marriage narrative, and even to augment their ranks from the world, however late in the day.

Some of the texts in this study, particularly the gothicized fictions in Chapter Two, reduce Shakerism's richness, complexity, and subversiveness with little apparent strain. Some, like Hawthorne's tales in Chapter One and the shorter Atlantic fictions in Chapter Three, find that Shakerism resists the reconstructive strategies or finalizing schemes used to appropriate it. Some -- including Elkins's novelized love story within his narration of facts, Howells' A Parting and a Meeting and The Day of Their Wedding, and Deland's The Way to Peace -- put Shakerism's subversive potential to use to test the limitations of conventional narrative, on and off the page.

This study is the first to treat these fictions in these perspectives, concentrating on the workings of finalizing schemes and reconstructive devices as features of non-Shakers' responses to Shakerism. Flo Morse's anthology The Shakers and the World's People (1980) and Mary L. Richmond's two-volume bibliography Shaker Literature (1977) have introduced a wide range of texts by and about Shakers to scholars and the public.

Of the particular Shaker fictions in this study, those of Hawthorne and Howells have received the most critical attention up to now. Hyatt Waggoner offered the first detailed analysis of Hawthorne's Shaker tales in his Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Critical Study (1955). Seymour Gross, in his 1958 article, "Hawthorne and the Shakers," traces some of

Hawthorne's negative portrayals of Shakers to his reading of Thomas Brown's 1812 apostate book, discussed in Chapter Two. Gloria Erlich, in Family Themes in Hawthorne's Fiction, has related Hawthorne's reactions toward Shakers to his own family dynamics. Rita K. Gollin has examined Hawthorne's responses to the Shakers in two articles, "Hawthorne Contemplates the Shakers, 1831-1851" (1978) and "Nathaniel Hawthorne: Flesh and the Spirit; or, 'Gratifying Your Coarsest Animal Needs'" (1991).

All these critics point to Hawthorne's commitment to love, and to his knowledge of the cost of denying the heart. In addition, Nina Baym, in The Shape of Hawthorne's Career (1976), relates the Shaker tales to Hawthorne's need to justify the fictional process. My treatment of the Hawthorne tales goes on from Baym's assertion, as I consider what would be at stake for him, and for his authorial agenda, in recognizing that Shakerism need not necessarily be life-denying. I also differ with these earlier critics on the texture of "The Canterbury Pilgrims," which I show to be dense with reconstructive devices in the form of allusions to other texts, which act in aggregate to close Shakerism away from author- and reader-involvement. I go on to consider the gothic treatment of Shakerism in "The Shaker Bridal" as a similar finalizing scheme.

In addition, I propose a reading of Hawthorne's Shaker fiction in conjunction with that of his contemporary Caroline

Lee Hentz, who wrote from a different personal and career agenda; Hentz went on to become a best-selling novelist but has not been canonized, though recent scholarly interest in women's domestic fiction has called new attention to her work. Rhoda Ellison sheds light on Hentz's experience of marriage in her article "Mrs. Hentz and the Green-Eyed Monster" (1950), and her life and writing are considered by Mary Kelley in Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America (1984) and by Elizabeth Moss in Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture (1992) but none of these critics treats "The Shaker Girl." Pairing Hawthorne and Hentz invites a not only what Reynolds would call a "reconstructive reading" of the age in which they were both at work, but also a reconsideration of what it means to be a major writer.

Oscar W. Firkins 1924 book William Dean Howells: A Study, gives scrupulous attention to each of Howells's works, including the Shaker fictions. As we have seen, Firkins was able to identify the complex range of feelings the Shakers engendered in Howells. Richard Chase praises the unity and the reminiscent quality of The Vacation of the Kelwyns in The American Novel and its Tradition (1957); Kermit Vanderbilt, extols The Undiscovered Country's similarly elegiac quality in The Achievement of William Dean Howells: A Reinterpretation (1968). Both Arnold B. Fox in "Howells's Doctrine of Complicity" (1952) and William McMurray in "The Concept of

Complicity in Howells' Fiction" (1962) discuss Howells's use of Shakerism in his examination of human mutuality and connectedness, and Allen Stein, in "Marriage in Howells's Novels" (1977), discusses marriage as a metaphor for this complicity in The Day of Their Wedding and The Vacation of the Kelwyns in "Marriage in Howells's Novels" (1977). Joel M. Jones, in "A Shaker Village Revisited: The Fading Familial Ideal in the World of William Dean Howells" (1982) puts previous critical treatments in perspective and traces a steady deepening of complexity in Howells's ongoing "interplay" among "Shakerism, marriage, and his social milieu" (98).

These critics, however, all reveal some degree of investment in the world that limits the possibilities they can explore both in Shakerism itself and in Howells's treatment of it; they are also invested in ideas of linear form and dialectical argument which cause them to fault the structures of some of the Shaker stories. While I do not deny that Howells's plots are sometimes hard to determine and may strain credibility, I propose that in these Shaker fictions the disruptions of expected narrative patterns are appropriate responses to the Shaker material. Similarly, while Elizabeth Stevens Prioleau, in The Circle of Eros: Sexuality in the Work of William Dean Howells (1983), treats The Day of Their Wedding as an "anti-marriage story" (127), I offer a new reading, enabled by Boone's perspectives, that calls this

story 'counter-marriage' rather than "anti-marriage" in content, and counter-traditional in form.

Regarding lesser-known Shaker fictions, including some of those in this study, Herma R. Cate's 1974 article "The Shakers in American Fiction" offers an overview of authorial interest in Shakerism from an early hostility, to an appropriation for local color, to a nostalgic interest, to a concern (since 1900) with presenting a "comprehensive picture of Shakerism" (24). My study stops in 1910, with texts at the crossroads between nostalgia and comprehensiveness, and my focus is on the degree to which these various authorial interests, and the narrative forms in which they were enacted, have promoted or hindered a recognition of Shaker authenticity.

Holley Gene Duffield has written on several topics related to this study, including "Brother Hervey Elkins' Short Story" in the Shaker Messenger (1993), "The Shaker Apostate Heroine" with Pamela Gates-Duffield (1993) and "A Chronological Bibliography of Narrative Fictions with Significant Delineations of Shakerism 1824-1987." I am especially grateful to him for making many of these hard-to-find texts available to me. Ruth Ann McAdams's Ph.D. dissertation from Texas Christian University, The Shakers in American Fiction (1985) discusses forty-four non-Shaker stories and novels about Shakers in terms of six significant character types: the Hypocrite; the Happy Shaker; the Skeptic; the Doubter; the Fanatic; and the Young Lover. McAdams's study

and mine treat some of the same texts; however, I address fewer texts and focus on the interrelation of social and interpretive issues and narrative conventions rather than on characterization.

The work of these later Shaker specialist scholars concerns itself directly with measuring the accuracy and sympathy of the fiction writers' portrayals of Shakers. My focus takes in these vital concerns and goes on to consider the texts as evidence of what is at stake for non-Shaker authors and their non-Shaker readers in these acts of translation, finalization, and reconstruction.

William Hepworth Dixon, a mid-nineteenth-century visitor from England who stopped at Mount Lebanon, reveals some of his own finalizing schemes in his book New America, published in 1867. He also, however, advises his readers to give respectful attention to the Shakers as they continue to assert their own narrative:

The Shaker is a monk, the Shakeress a nun. They have nothing to say to this world; yet their church, so often described as a moral craze, a religious comedy, a ritual of high jinks, at best a church of St. Vitus, not of St. Paul, will be seen, when we come to understand it, to have some singular attractions. The magnetic power which it is exercising on American thought would, of itself, compel us, even though we should be unwilling hearers, to sit out the comedy and try to comprehend the plot. (2:89)

I hope that this study will help enhance our awareness of the strategies we all use in our daily authoring. I hope it will remind us to keep our own life-texts open, even to potentially

subversive forces, and to try, as we author our own worlds, to "lend these forces" our own "depth and artistry" (Reynolds 563). An enhanced capacity to "comprehend the plot" may then become yet another gift -- like all Shaker gifts, complex in its simplicity -- from the Shakers to us.

We may find some sense of the priorities of the Shakers' own narrative by looking back to the Book Notice page of the September 1880 Manifesto. While withholding recommendation from the "propriety" and "philosophy" of The Undiscovered Country, the Manifesto heartily endorses three quite different books. It commends The American Newspaper Dictionary to "the patronage of all advertisers," especially "respectable business men." It finds possibilities "simply wonderful to think of" in J.M. Bailey's The Book of Ensilage, which tells how to preserve "clover, corn fodder, peas, beans, etc." in "the green state for winter and spring use." And it predicts an "immense demand" for Spiritual Harmonies, "the work of our friend and brother J.M. Peebles," which contains "nearly one hundred popular hymns and songs, with a summary of the belief of Spiritualists, and a series of sensible and comforting readings for the sick room and funeral" (207). Clearly, the reviewer who speaks here for the Shaker community recognizes a positive role for books in addressing the concerns of our outer and inner life: sound business practice; efficient food production and preservation; concise presentation of religious belief; and comfort in suffering and

loss.

The Manifesto review merits consideration for several reasons, including its errors. Howells's middle initial is "D", not "H". Also, he had not dragged the Shakers into any of his "stories" before The Undiscovered Country. All he had written about the Shakers at that time was a nonfiction article for the Atlantic about his six-week vacation near the Shirley community in 1875; Shirley's Elder John Whiteley had contributed to the editing of this piece, however, and the Manifesto had praised its sympathy and accuracy when it appeared the following year.¹⁸ And, as we will see, "A House of Entertainment" is not by Howells, but by Horace Elisha Scudder.

These errors may signal a current of exasperation running through the review. The Shakers at this time were losing numbers to old age and apostasies, and fewer new members were coming in. They had reason to be concerned about being placed in "a ridiculous light before the world." Elder Whiteley's role in Howells's article shows that, rightly or wrongly, they saw writers from the world as potentially helpful to their cause. ¹⁹ It is no wonder, then, that the Shakers might bristle when yet another fiction appeared that they felt did

¹⁸ The cuts the Shakers made in the article for reprinting in their own Manifesto are instructive and deserve further study.

¹⁹ Gifford and Sprigg (Foreword to "An Early View") discuss the Shakers' concern at mid-nineteenth century in negotiating a positive public image.

not do them justice, regardless of who the writer was. Writers appeared to be a thorn in their flesh, affording them a hardly rapturous pain.

CHAPTER I

AUTHORING THE SHAKERS; OR, "A GIFT TO BE USEFUL" IN "THIS REPUBLICAN COUNTRY": NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE AND CAROLINE LEE HENTZ

In the decade of the 1830s, two American writers who would later gain prominence were claiming fictional authority over the Shakers in popular periodicals. Nathaniel Hawthorne's tales, "The Canterbury Pilgrims" and "The Shaker Bridal," appeared anonymously in the numbers of the gift book annual The Token and Atlantic Souvenir for 1833 and 1838 respectively, and The Lady's Book for February 1839 carried a story, "The Shaker Girl," advertised as "written especially" for that magazine by "Mrs. Caroline Lee Hentz" (49). Because "The Shaker Bridal" uses formal gothic elements more explicitly than the other two stories, it will be discussed in the next chapter. This chapter focuses on "The Canterbury Pilgrims" and "The Shaker Girl," showing how Hawthorne and Hentz use Shakerism as material for storytelling and as an opportunity to pursue issues of love and authorship. Both these stories endorse worldly companionate marriage and family over Shaker celibacy and communalism, yet each conveys its own measure of ambivalence toward this endorsement. At the same time, each story brings the Shaker life to bear on questions

of what it meant to be an author in an emerging nation.

Both writers assert their authority over Shakerism through similar reconstructive strategies. Both draw, directly and indirectly, on the authority of their world's known texts -- the Bible, the writings of such canonical authors as Shakespeare and Milton, the Arabian Nights, the temperance tract, the Sunday school lesson, and, in "The Shaker Bridal" the minister's homily and the published Shaker apostate account. In addition, both inject a narrator's voice to comment on the Shakers from outside the action of the story. Through these textual strategies of interjecting a narrative presence and inserting a variety of known genres, both Hawthorne and Hentz seek to bring the familiar-yet-different world of Shakerism under greater measures of writer and reader control.

Hawthorne and Hentz, however, put these strategies to work on Shakerism according to differing agendas of authorship. In this chapter, I propose that Hawthorne's story is a an act of exclusion, seeking to neutralize Shakerism's subversive potential by surrounding it with generic allusion; I then propose that Hentz's story, though it uses similar strategies, is an act of inclusion, making a plea for a kind of accommodating mentality that can take in both Shakerism and worldly marriage. Readers seeking the Shakers in both stories must thus look for them through the two writers' differing agendas, heavily laden with issues of authorship.

These issues include not only the career authors' investment in endorsing their society's narratives of marriage and work, but also a growing uncertainty, to be discussed further on in the chapter, over just what those narratives comprised.

At this time, Hawthorne was a bachelor moving into his thirties, living with his mother and two sisters in his uncle's house in Salem. According to biographer Arlin Turner, he had "given himself totally to literature" since his graduation from Bowdoin in 1825 -- "reading, thinking, musing, dreaming, writing, and destroying much of what he wrote" (79). Thus, in these tales, he was appropriating Shakerism from his stand as a committed artist. In his eyes, this position required him to justify his chosen literary profession -- for himself and for his public -- as genuinely meaningful work.

Hentz was also in her thirties, a mother of four, living in Florence, Alabama, where she and her French emigre husband Nicholas Marcellus Hentz were running a girls' boarding school. Having been born in Massachusetts and lived there until after her marriage, she had ties to both North and South and was distressed by the growing division between the regions. She was committed to national conciliation in her roles as aspiring writer ¹ teacher, and mother in a young

¹ The role of women as producers and readers of fiction was becoming increasingly significant. Judith Fetterley notes that approximately 200 works of fiction were published in the United States between 1779 and 1829, of which more than one-third were intended for women (26). By mid-nineteenth century, Fetterley observes, "the woman who picked up her pen ... may have felt she was occupying essentially feminine territory"

republic.

Hawthorne seems to have begun his authoring of the Shakers in a letter written from Canterbury dated 17 August 1831. We may assume that he was looking for literary material (Turner 71-72) as he accompanied his uncle Samuel Manning on a horse-trading trip to New Hampshire, and in this letter he regales his younger sister Louisa with an account of his two visits to the Shakers. On 14 August he had attended their Sunday meeting, along with "two or three hundred" other "spectators", and he reports that there were

thirty or forty Shaker ladies, some of them quite pretty, all dressed in very light gowns, with a muslin handkerchief crossed over the bosom and a stiff muslin cap, so that they looked pretty much as if they had just stepped out of their coffins. There was nothing very remarkable in the men except their stupidity, and it did look queer to see these great boobies cutting the most ridiculous capers with the gravest countenances imaginable. (qtd. in Gollin, "Hawthorne ... Shakers 58)

He goes on to say, "Most of the females were above thirty, and the white muslin was very trying to all their complexions." ²

(6-7). See Kelley for a discussion of the ambivalence many women writers, including Hentz, felt in trying to balance marriage and career authorship. This issue will be explored later in the chapter.

² Hawthorne's estimate of the sisters' ages is borne out by census data showing that in 1830 the Canterbury community had a population of 236 -- 140 female and ninety-six male; of the women, seventy-nine were indeed over thirty years of age, as were fifty-five of the men (Brewer 235).

It is interesting to note that William Hepworth Dixon would later remark in New America that non-Shaker women in New England were pale, too. "When looking at these sweet New England girls, as they go trooping past my window," he observes, "I cannot help feeling that with this delicate pallor, winsome and poetic as it looks to an artist in female

Here we see him being writerly as well as accurate, tailoring his details to his audience and clearly enjoying his own effects. He goes on to recount a second visit on 16 August, when he tasted the "superb" Shaker cider and was "shown over the whole establishment" before dining with two other visitors from the "'world's people'" (58). The dining room, he notes, was

well-furnished, the dinner excellent, and the table attended by a Shaker lady, good-looking and cheerful, and not to be distinguished in manners or conversation from other well-educated women in the country. (qtd. in Gollin, "Hawthorne ... Shakers" 58-59)

He found the community "immensely rich," with lands extending "two or three miles along the road" and a "Brick edifice" under construction "for their public business" which would cost "seven or eight thousand dollars" (59).³ In closing, he observes that "[on] the whole," the Shakers

lead a good and comfortable life, and if it were not for their ridiculous ceremonies, a man could do no wiser thing than to join them. Those I conversed with were intelligent, and appeared happy. I spoke to them about becoming a member of the Society, but have come to no decision on that point. (qtd. in Gollin "Hawthorne ... Shakers" 59)

Hawthorne is more the prospective writer than the

beauty, there must be a lack of vital power. ... Would that these dainty cousins of ours were a trifle more robust!" (II:34)

³ Once again, Hawthorne's reporting is accurate, as was his informant's estimate; the Trustee Shop, under construction at the time of his visit, was completed the following year at a total cost of \$7440.57 (Church History II, 251; Canterbury archives).

prospective Shaker in these remarks. In this letter, and in another, written from Salem to his cousin John Dike and dated 9 September 1831, we may detect what Turner calls a "degree of posing" characteristic of Hawthorne's letters to his family during his boyhood and college years (38). In the letter to Dike, he claims that he has "some idea of joining the Shakers," having been "well-pleased with their manner of life" (qtd. in Gollin, "Hawthorne ... Shakers 59). He concludes, however, that "there will be time enough for that when I have tried how I can content myself with the married state" (59).

Like the stories which would follow, these letters are the created texts of an aspiring author. Serious or facetious as this posing before the family might have been, however, the two Shaker tales show that Shakerism did exert a hold on Hawthorne's imagination, and a challenge to his writerly authority. He was to respond to this hold and this challenge by translating the Shakers into fiction.

In "The Canterbury Pilgrims," the young Shakers Josiah and Miriam have fallen in love and are running away together from the Canterbury community, under the cover of night. At the stone fountain near the village, beneath the "summer moon which shines in so many a tale" (518), they meet a group of weary travelers on their way to join the Shakers. Each traveler tells the lovers a sad story of life in the world: a poet recounts his failure to find a public, a merchant the loss of his money, and a yeoman married couple the frustration

of their modest hopes, the deaths of two of their four children, and the ending of their love for each other. Nevertheless, Josiah and Miriam resolve that they will not turn back. They are not afraid of the world because, as Josiah says, they will "'always love one another'" (530). The travellers continue up the hill, seeking, as the narrator tells us,

a home where all former ties of nature or society would be sundered, and all old distinctions leveled, and a cold and passionless security be substituted for earthly hope and fear, as in that other refuge of the world's weary outcasts, the grave. (530).

The lovers, meanwhile, drink "at the Shaker spring, and then, with chastened hopes, but more confiding affections, [go] on to mingle in an untried life" (530).

Nina Baym has linked "The Canterbury Pilgrims" to Hawthorne's issues of authorship, observing that the tale "justifies the literary object and hence literary activity by displaying fiction as the vehicle for conservative wisdom" (Shape of Hawthorne's Career 51). Hyatt Waggoner has noted that Hawthorne's particular sensibility "could respond fully only to moral values" (34). Waggoner is taking about Hawthorne's criteria in choosing facts from actual experience for "creative shaping" in his art (34); however, when the narratives of love and work -- more specifically, of marriage and career -- become the forms for enacting conservative wisdom, these narrative forms take on their own significance as moral values.

Therefore, to justify fiction in a story by using Shaker material, Hawthorne must show Shakerism at odds with conservative wisdom. In "The Canterbury Pilgrims," however, he has some trouble doing this. Certainly, he can rely on his readers to sympathize with young lovers following their hearts, but how is he to make an act of conservative wisdom out of their secret moonlit flight from the only home they know? After all, his poet, merchant, and yeoman couple on their way to joining the Shakers are the story's real conservatives; these characters are not so much giving up the world as cutting their losses in it, trying to preserve what little of it they have left.

Thus, to justify his story, his authorship, and his whole enterprise of fiction, Hawthorne needs to foreground the absconding Shaker lovers as guardians of conservative values. He attempts to do this in two ways. On the one hand, he seeks to diminish the credibility of the characters who choose to become Shakers, by portraying them as sorry failures in the world and as stock characters drawn from commonly held stereotypes. On the other, he seeks to enhance the credibility of the young lovers by allying them with the marriage narrative, as enacted both in the world but and in the world's literary canon. For the first of these tasks, he asserts his own narrating presence; for the second, he marshals an impressive array of explicit and implicit associations with already established texts.

Thus, though Gollin has called "The Canterbury Pilgrims" "relatively unequivocal" ("Hawthorne ... Shakers" 60), and Waggoner has compared it to "a beautifully constructed piece of music" which is "intricately balanced in structure but relatively thin in texture" (77), the story achieves its apparent unity of voice and structure through an insistent and not-so-unequivocal act of authoring down the Shakers, enclosing them in a dense texture of reconstructive practices.

We begin to experience this texture in the story's title, which provides its first canonical association; the failed poet, too, has a Chaucerian moment when he urges each of the Bunyanesque pilgrims, who all appear burdened with "the cares and sorrows of the world" (520) to tell a tale to the company, "'for our own pastime'" and "'for the benefit of these poor misguided lovers'" (520), as he calls Josiah and Miriam. However, this poet is quickly established as the figure who, Waggoner points out, receives Hawthorne's "most cutting irony" because he is "the type most like himself -- the dreamer, the artist, the seeker after significance, the writer who believes he has great gifts but is unappreciated by the public" (70). "What is the voice of song," the poet laments histrionically,

'when the world has lost the ear of taste? ... Have I dreaded scorn like death, and yearned for fame as others pant for vital air, only to find myself in the middle state between obscurity and infamy?' (522)

Joining the Shakers is not only the poet's escape from

near-starvation but also his idea of revenge against an unappreciative world. However, when he presents himself as "one of the fathers of American song," driven by public indifference in an "unworthy age" to "end his days in a Shaker village" (523), he is addressing a real issue that troubled Hawthorne at the outset of his career -- the public taste for British and European rather than American writers (Turner 51). Also, through such declaiming by one of his characters, Hawthorne may be taking his own refuge, in self-parody, from too close a personal identification with the artist's role.

This possibility is supported by Henry G. Fairbanks's discussion of Hawthorne's personal conflict between his artistic vocation and the New England work ethic as evident in his "Passage from a Relinquished Work." That composition is dated 1832, the same year the Shaker tales were probably written.⁴ In it, a young man who wishes to keep "aloof from the regular business of life" realizes that this chosen abstinence from gainful employment, even when one can afford it, "would have a dangerous resolution anywhere in the world" and would be "fatal in New England" (qtd. Fairbanks 147-48). Fairbanks goes on to say that the "hostility of New England and America" toward the prevailing view of the artist as a wandering, rootless aesthete of too-exquisite sensibilities

⁴ Gollin, "Hawthorne ... Shakers" 64n6; Gross argues that the stories were probably written at the same time, since they complement each other structurally (457-458n).

"half-convinced" Hawthorne that he himself was a "'fiddler'" whose chief purpose was diversion" (148). Though Fairbanks does not discuss "The Canterbury Pilgrims" in this regard, the characterization of the failed poet bears out his further claim that Hawthorne "often fell into the role completely and curried favor with his readers by jibing asides at his own expense" (148).

The Shakers in the story are actually kinder to the poet than his author/creator is. When Josiah wonders aloud "'what under the sun'"the Shakers can "'do with this poor varse-maker,'" as the elders admit "'nobody that has not got a gift to be useful'" (523), Miriam kindly reproves him for his bluntness. She suggests that the poet may be set to "'smooth'" some of their "'rough'" Shaker hymns (524). The poet is not particularly receptive to this idea, however, and soon appears to forget the assembled company as the moonlight inspires him to compose a "Farewell to his Harp." The poem, we are told by the narrator, was later sent "by one of the Shaker brethren" with "two or three other little pieces, subsequently written," to "Concord, where they were published by the New Hampshire Patriot" (524) -- a real newspaper that frequently included a sentimental or patriotic poem in its columns.⁵ The reference

⁵ Perusal of issues for 1830 and 1831 has not so far yielded an actual poem that could be identified as this poet-turned-Shaker's "Farewell to his Harp." However, the harp as a symbol of the poetic voice appears in the by-line 'Harp of Cona' for a poem called "Converse with the Soul," in which the poet finds "pleasure in the sight / Of whiten'd tombstones glitt'ring in the light / Of the pale lovely moon" (13

would evoke echoes of newspaper verse for many of Hawthorne's original readers, offering them some idea of the imagery, cadence, and general character of what this poet calls his "'bright creations'" (522). The detail also lets us know that the Shakers have indeed taken the poet in, though we may wonder how they have put his particular gifts to use.⁶

Like the poet, the other pilgrims bound for Canterbury speak for aspects of worldly experience in their time: the bankrupt merchant for the uneasy economy and the yeoman couple for the strains that unrewarded labor and increasing poverty exert on married love in hard times. The merchant has lost consequence and credibility as well as wealth. He is reduced to scribbling endless calculations and estimates as he vows to double the Shakers' capital "'in four or five years'" if they will but place him in charge of their trading concerns (526). Some dignity, however, remains in the yeoman couple, who are less stereotyped and more fully drawn than the poet or the merchant, and a change of mood begins when the husband speaks. He has "'asked nothing more of Providence'" than "'an ordinary blessing on the sweat of [his] brow,'" but though he has "'labored hard for years,'" he has only seen his "'means

February 1830, 1), affirming the role of moonlight and graves -- both of which figure in "The Canterbury Pilgrims" -- in the contemporary poetic sensibility.

⁶ Edward Deming Andrews assures us, however, that the "skills possessed by the noewcomer in the society almost universally found a usefulplace in the varied economic life of the village" (Work and Worship 145).

growing narrower, and [his] living poorer, and [his] heart colder and heavier, all the time'" (527). He has brought his wife and their two remaining children to the Shakers rather than undertake an Oregon expedition because he has "'not enough hope left to begin the world anew'" (527).

By the time wife takes up the tale, the "shade of irritability just perceptible in the sadness of her tone" (528) is the only authorial touch that might distance her from the reader; it actually serves, however, to make her character the most convincing, and at the same time the most moving, of the worldly pilgrims. "'Tis a thing almost against nature,'" she tells Miriam,

'for a woman to try to part true lovers, ... but I'll speak as truly to you as if these were my dying words. ... If you and your sweetheart marry, you'll be kind and pleasant to each other for a year or two, and while that's the case, you never will repent; but, by and by, he'll grow gloomy, rough, and hard-to-please, and you'll be peevish, and full of little angry fits, and apt to be complaining by the fireside, when he comes in from his troubles out of doors; so your love will wear away little by little, and leave you miserable at the last. It has been so with us; and yet my husband and I were true lovers once, if ever two young folks were. (529)

The wife and husband, standing "on the utmost verge of married life" (529), thus offer the reader one possible outcome for the world's marriage narrative which Josiah and Miriam are about to begin. The children, who have fallen asleep at their parents' feet, now wake up hungry. Their demands remind us that the only hope this couple can now see for saving what is left of their family is to separate from

their past, and, in the world's terms, from each other. Thus, the story of the yeoman couple, including the tale-within-a-tale they tell themselves, challenges the conservative wisdom that privileges marriage and individual enterprise. This is also, however, the wisdom that Hawthorne's story is trying to uphold.

He shows himself as aware of this paradox when he has the wife claim that parting two lovers is "almost against nature" (529) -- when nature, of course, is represented by companionate marriage. Nevertheless, in trying to use Shakerism to endorse conservative wisdom and so justify his own authoring, Hawthorne has had to include a troubling recognition that the world's narratives of love and work do not necessarily sustain each other.

And yet, these worldly narratives are the very ones that the young Shaker lovers Josiah and Miriam are seeking to enter. Their chief motivation for leaving the Shakers is their individual love, which has no place in the community; nevertheless, enacting the world's narrative of marriage requires them enter the career narrative as well, if they are to "'earn [their] bread among the world's people'", for themselves and for "'some little mouths, if God send them'" (526) They are ready to enter both these narratives, and what they hear from the yeoman couple does not dissuade them. However, in order for the story to perform its enactment of conventional wisdom, Josiah and Miriam must succeed where the

yeoman couple has failed; wedded love and individual work must be shown to triumph in the same world that has defeated the yeoman couple and driven them -- and those eccentric misfits, the poet and the merchant -- to the grave-like refuge of the Shakers.

Hawthorne authorizes the lovers' choice through two formal strategies: he uses one of his narrator's asides to inform his readers that Josiah and Miriam have indeed found their place in the world, and he draws the young Shaker couple into a web of allusions that unite them with lovers already known to his readers from canonical literary productions.

His narrator's presence asserts itself in the first pages of the story. We are told that the teller of the tale has personally paused and drunk from the spring-fed fountain at the foot of the hill where the story takes place (518), and the teller gives a first-hand description of the couple's appearance. In this description, as at the end of the tale, the grave figures as a symbol for Shakerism:

But that there was something warm and life-like in them, I would have compared this young couple to the ghosts of two young lovers who had died long ago in the glow of their passion, and were now staying out of their graves to shadow forth the unforgotten kiss of their earthly lips, beside the moonlit spring. (519)

Between these personal claims upon us as readers, we are asked, almost subliminally, to believe that the narrator has recently seen this same couple in the world: they "were then in the first freshness of their youth, nor is there a wrinkle

now on either of their brows" (518). The moonlight, the ghostly atmosphere, and the couple's old-fashioned dress all seem to situate this story in a make-believe place and time. However, the setting is a real, named locale in New Hampshire, and if neither Josiah nor Miriam has any wrinkles yet, the time of the story cannot be long gone by.

Readers of the Token may or may not have been convinced of the narrator's authority, and, since the story was published anonymously, they had no author to identify -- or to confuse -- with the narrator. Still, though the narrator's avowed presence in this instance may or may not validate the story's events for the reader, it does help the story itself to validate the marriage and individual-achievement narratives. It does this by letting us know, even before we have heard the lovers' story, that they have come out of these events alive and well. Their act of defiance against the authority of their Shaker family thus validates conservative wisdom, not only because it is motivated by the world's 'naturalized' marriage and career narratives, but also because it succeeds.

Hawthorne's authoring also includes the strategy of situating Josiah and Miriam in the company of other couples from literature who leave home together, though under differing circumstances. In the story's opening, for example, Luther S. Luedtke has noted the "input" of Samuel Johnson's Rasselas, with the departing Shaker couple calling to mind

the young prince Rasselas and his sister Nekayah, setting out from their pleasant valley to try the uncertainties of the world (Luedtke 86). The opening dialogue of Hawthorne's lovers, when they pause in the moonlight by the Shakers' spring-fed fountain and Miriam urges Joshua to "sit farther off" (518), links them to Hermia and Lysander in A Midsummer Night's Dream; Shakespeare's lovers, we may remember, are fleeing by moonlight to escape from an Athenian law which requires her to choose between an arranged marriage to a man she does not love and a life of "single blessedness" (I:i:78) as a Vestal virgin, a "barren sister .../ Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon" (I:i:72-73). Josiah and Miriam have considered the travellers' "varied narratives," which seem "not merely instances of woful fate that had befallen others, but shadowy omens of disappointed hope and unavailing toil, domestic grief and estranged affection" that will "cloud" their "onward path"; they nonetheless "resolve," with a "pure and fond" embrace "hallowed" by their youthful love, that they will not go back to the safety of their Shaker home. Going on, with their "chastened hopes but more confiding affections" to "mingle in an untried life" (530), they have now become Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost, Milton's chastened but still-companionate wedded couple. The world is "all before them, where to choose / Their place of rest, and Providence their guide"; now "hand in hand, with painful steps and slow," they must take "their solitary way" through New

England instead of Eden (PL Book 12, ll.646-649).

Each of these allusions represents a stage in the life-pilgrimage of the Shaker couple. Josiah and Miriam begin as Johnson's royal siblings, soul-mates in a bond other than marriage. They then become Shakespeare's lovers, ardent for each other but subject to influences that seek to shift their alliances under the summer moon. By the time we take our leave of Josiah and Miriam, they are going on to become parents in the world, just as Milton's Adam and Eve, though forced into exile for defying patriarchal authority, went on in the Biblical narrative to become the generational father and mother of us all.

However, these canonical allusions, if we follow them through, suggest ambivalences of their own. Rasselas and Nekayah, after all, decide to return to their Abyssinian childhood home; their travels have given them material for plenty of genial musing, but they realize that her dreams for founding "a college of learned women" where she can "raise up for the next age models of prudence and patterns of piety" and his hope for "a little kingdom in which he might administer justice in his own person" are not obtainable in the world outside (150). We leave Hermia and Lysander on their way to consummate their wedding after a triple ceremony and a night's revels.

If we as readers are meant to note this shift of allusions, the story may be subtly affirming a dictum, in

keeping with conservative wisdom, to outgrow the supposedly childish brother-sister bond and move on to a recognition of the real world through adult sexual love, the next prescribed stage of growth. Still, the course of love has not run smooth for Hermia and Lysander, and the spirit world that has impinged on their story is still close by. Adam and Eve, the last couple in this sequence of equations, end up together in the world, but they are condemned to banishment and travail. Hawthorne appears to be using these allusions to claim authority over his Shaker characters by situating them in a sequence of narratives culled from canonical texts; nevertheless, these same canonical texts may problematize the conservative wisdom he has sought to endorse in appropriating them.

Hawthorne's act of translating Shakerism into a story that would uphold conservative wisdom and his own authoring aspirations also required him to look to the Shaker Ministry for a conventional blocking figure who could stand in the way of 'nature' and true love. Though "Father Job" does not appear in person and his last name is never given, Hawthorne may be using a real Shaker elder in this capacity. Josiah calls "Father Job" a "very awful man to speak with," who, "being aged himself, ... has but little charity for what he calls the iniquities of the flesh" (521).⁷

⁷ It is worth mentioning that Hawthorne's authority over the words "awful," "awfulness," and "awfully" has been authorized in turn by the Oxford English Dictionary. His use

Josiah could mean that Father Job could command terror, or reverence, or a sense of majesty, or all these feelings and more. To fulfill his role in this story, however, he need only be patriarchal and insistent on celibacy. He does not even have to appear in the story, as long as his blocking presence is felt by the lovers and the reader. His important trait for this function is his assumed alienation from the 'natural' feelings of youth.

If Father Job is indeed Job Bishop ⁸ -- who was born in 1760, converted in his youth by Mother Ann Lee, and sent to New Hampshire in 1792 from the Home Ministry in New Lebanon to take charge of the Canterbury and Enfield communities -- then this assumption says more about Hawthorne's authoring agenda than about a real Shaker's character. Bishop was indeed called

of "awfullest" in the French and Italian Notebooks is cited to support the meaning of "awful" as "causing dread; terrible, dreadful, appalling" as of 1858; his use of "awfulness" in the English Notebooks is cited as evidence that in 1870 it meant not only the "quality of inspiring awe; terribleness; dreadfulness" but also "impressive solemnity"; and his use of "awfully," again in the French and Italian Notebooks, is cited under the definition "So as to command reverence, or impress the imagination; sublimely; majestically" The OED also notes Charles Lamb's observation that Americans after 1834 were becoming known for a slang use of the word, to mean "Frightful, very ugly, monstrous" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1961:I,595). Whichever meaning of "awful" is intended, Hawthorne's Shaker youth is describing his elder in a word Hawthorne himself helped situate in the language of his time.

⁸ I am grateful to Darryl Thompson, chief tour guide at Canterbury Shaker Village, for the idea of investigating this connection.

Father, though this designation was not standard for elders,⁹ and he was in residence at Canterbury during the week when Hawthorne visited there in 1831 (John Whitcher journal). We do not know if Hawthorne met him, or if he addressed the meeting Hawthorne described to Louisa.

However, Bishop's personal testimony of his spiritual history, dated 3 August 1826 and published the following year, indicates that in his old age he had not forgotten the struggles of his youth in "taking up a daily cross against all the evil propensities of a carnal nature" (Testimonies . . ., 1827 ed., 161). Hervey Elkins, in his 1853 apostate account of his own fifteen years with the Shakers at Enfield (to be discussed in the next chapter), says that Bishop's mind was "of that order which saw clearly and at a glance the strength or infirmity of men," and which "decided at one glance without hesitation or repeal" (19); even so, Elkins asserts that Bishop was well-qualified by his "gentleness, kindness, and humility -- his reliance upon a power above, for all the spiritual affairs of the church, to lead a theological sect" (19).

After Bishop's sudden death from a "dropsy of the heart" on 5 December 1831, barely four months after Hawthorne's visit Elder Micajah Tucker's eulogy expressed the hope the each one

⁹ Hannah Goodrich, who was sent with Bishop to assume the Lead Ministry for the two New Hampshire communities, was called "Mother," but her successors were not. Stein uses this shift in designation as evidence of a change away from worldly models in structuring the Shaker Families (111, 123-24).

present at Bishop's funeral "might individually have a feeling sense of the "many privileges we have had for years past in hearing and receiving the kind instruction and wise counsel of our beloved Parent" (Whitcher journal, Canterbury archives).

Job Bishop may in fact have been a fearful presence, particularly to young Shakers like Josiah and Miriam who were finding it increasingly difficult to take up their daily cross. However, if Hawthorne was indeed appropriating Bishop, he found greater moral and literary use for the elder's formidable decisiveness than for his gentler qualities. It would not have served conservative wisdom or Hawthorne's authoring agenda to present Father Job as a complex man who remembered his early struggles and who had embraced celibacy as a positive choice.

We may enhance our understanding of Hawthorne's story, and of Hentz's story to be discussed next, if we consider the indeterminate condition of marriage and career narratives among the world's people in America of the 1830s. The American middle-class readers of the Token and the Lady's Book were experiencing uncertainties in both these areas of their lives. As Richard Millington notes "Hawthorne began to write at a time when the life structure we now call the professional career path of male ambition was particularly undefined and uncertain" (7-8). Much of this uncertainty was due to a growing emphasis on private initiative and individual achievement, and this emphasis brought with it a new tension

between the "particularly alluring" image of the "transcendent individual" and growing suspicions of the threat such an individual might pose to the solidarity and permanence of the larger social body (7). Meanwhile, as Burton Bledstein explains in his historical study of the development of middle-class professionalism in America, "career patterns in the nineteenth century were still uncertain as men jumped from profession to profession," and that "lax entrance requirements facilitated fluidity even in the established professions" (163; qtd. in Rothman 8).

For example, a man might teach school for a time, keep a store or other business, and then go on to study law, medicine, or divinity. Teaching was often a short-term interim occupation, but more men were becoming career teachers and professors as the century progressed. Women's options were more limited, but a young woman at home with her parents might earn a measure of independence by sewing or weaving, stitching shoes or hats, or teaching for a season in a one-room school; those who were "more venturesome -- or more needy" might go out to work in textile mills, or become dressmakers or milliners (Rothman 8). A man was expected to support his wife and children, and the tensions -- for both men and women -- further problematized the role of work in what Joel Pfister calls the "privatized sense of self integral to the middle-class ideology of individualism" (Rothman 8)

Of course, one of the major socially sanctioned

motivations for a man to work and establish a career was to provide a home for a wife and children. Marriage, as Ellen Rothman points out in her history of courtship practice in America, was "not merely a way to organize society's daily life and ensure its future," but was also "the primary source of nurturance, intimacy, and security available to individual adults" (60).

Meanwhile, the nation's shift from an agricultural to a commercial economy and towards a more individualistic outlook also included an increasing privatization of courtship and marriage in the growing middle class. As the eighteenth century moved into the nineteenth, parents were playing a decreasing role in the selection of mates for their children. Young people were left more and more on their own to seek and choose spouses, and felt less responsible to the community for the choices they made. With this increased autonomy came an "ideology of romantic love" that relegated "friendship between men and women" to the status of "consolation prize"; the word "friend" was still used to refer to a mate, but "friendship was increasingly defined in terms of the distinction from -- and implied inferiority to -- love" (37).

The exclusivity implicit in this ideology of love places the marriage narrative firmly in the culture of middle-class individualism. This culture required a paradoxical separation from the known patterns of continuity and community which had been operant in the eighteenth century, and an assumption of

new roles and behaviors based on individual acts -- personal careers and personal marriages, both of which now involved leaving familiar surroundings and associations and exchanging an old life for a new one. To join the mainstream, as a married man with a profession in the world or a married woman with a home to manage, it was becoming increasingly necessary to act on one's own.

The individualizing of work expectations sent men out into the world to establish careers and identities; the privatizing of family life directed them to provide self-contained homes, preferably away from the world of work and out in the growing suburbs, for their own wives and children. For women, whose prescribed sphere was the home, True Womanhood and Republican motherhood became the middle-class's validating commitments. True Womanhood, as Barbara Welter points out, meant living lives of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity ("Cult ... Womanhood" 152). Wives, according to an 1808 minister's sermon quoted by Welter, had "'interesting and important responsibilities': by their "'pious assiduous, and attractive deportment'" they were to strive constantly to render their husbands "'more useful, more honorable, and more happy'" (Samuel Miller qtd. in Welter, "Cult ... Womanhood" 170). And William Alcott's 1837 domestic manual, The Young Wife, insists that "woman's true greatness consists ... in rendering others useful, rather than in being useful herself" (354).

When wives became mothers, the privatization of marriage and family and the separation of spheres caused the responsibility for child care to devolve increasingly upon the female parent. Mary Ryan notes that parenting in America had been more of a joint responsibility in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and that "[s]ermons, family manuals, and even an occasional 'father's book'" reminded "both men and women" of the responsibility it entailed; after 1830, however, "child-care became designated as woman's work, with the usual flourish of adulation" (Womanhood in America, 164). The "Republican Mother," Rothman recounts, "replaced the eighteenth-century patriarch as the primary molder of the next generation" (115).

Thus, for both men and women, marriage meant new challenges, new dependencies, and new stresses. A man went out every day to pit his initiative against the vagaries of a capitalist economy, depending on his wife to "provide a well-ordered and virtuous home" (Rothman 75) for him to return to each night. A woman maintained the home as a refuge from the world and nurtured her children with her tender vigilance and moral example, all the while depending on her husband "for her livelihood and social position" (Rothman 75). In an increasingly individualistic society, these new challenges and new patterns of dependency further complicated the shifting narratives of work and marriage and often imparted conflicting messages to Americans seeking self-validation and personal

connection in careers and relationships.

One effect of this increasing privatization of work and relationships and separation of spheres was a growing reluctance among young women to exchange their increased self-sufficiency, however modest, for marriage and motherhood. Courting couples now enjoyed more freedom from chaperonage and greater autonomy to plan their own futures together. Actual marriage, however, as Rothman points out, "brought an end to this stage of life in which middle-class men and women interacted in relative freedom from the restrictions of their various spheres" (75).

It is not surprising, then, to find Mrs. Lydia Maria Child's advice manual, The Mother's Book, published in 1831, chiding those mothers who "are always urging their daughters to 'enjoy themselves while they are single' -- 'to be happy while they have a chance'"; the same mothers who give this "gloomy picture of domestic life (making it a frightful bugbear to the young imagination)" and "at the same time," they "urge upon [their daughters] the necessity of getting married for respectability's sake'" (166).

To illustrate her point, Child goes on to offer a cautionary tale and a warning:

I once heard a girl, accustomed to such remarks, say, with apparent sincerity, 'I should like of all things to be married, if I could be sure my husband would die in a fortnight; then I should avoid the disgrace of being an old maid, and get rid of the restraint and trouble of married life.' (166)

Child concedes that "Strange and unnatural as such a sentiment may appear," it was nevertheless "just what might have been expected from one accustomed to such selfish views of a relation so holy and blessed in its nature." Therefore, she asserts,

It is all-important that charming pictures of domestic life should be presented to the young. It should be described as, -- what it really is, -- the home of woman's affections and her pleasantest sphere of duty. Your daughter should never hear her own marriage speculated or jested upon; but the subject in general should be associated in her mind with everything pure, bright, and cheerful. (166)

Child's book is dedicated to "American Mothers, on Whose Intelligence and Discretion the Safety and Prosperity of the Republic So Much Depend."

The Shaker tales of Hawthorne and Hentz, then, were being offered to an American reading public that faced not only economic uncertainty -- there was a depression in 1837 -- but also confusion over finding appropriate narratives through which to pursue self-definition in work and relationships.

Caroline Lee Hentz had not yet become a best-selling career novelist when she wrote "The Shaker Girl." That would happen in 1850 with her novel, Linda; or, The Young Pilot of the Belle Creole. Other successes would follow, sometimes two a year. Hawthorne did not mention her or her books by name in his complaint to his publisher in 1855 about America's "d--d mob of scribbling women" (qtd. in Moss 3n), but he could well have had her in mind.

In the 1830s, however, she was occupied with caring for

four children, teaching school and supervising student boarders, and coping with her husband's increasingly unstable health and temperament. Their son Charles, who became a physician, notes in an unpublished autobiography that his father suffered from "a most unreasoning and unhappy jealousy" compounded by a habit of excessive snuff-taking" (Ellison 346). The family was obliged to move often because of his jealous outbursts, and had left Cincinnati in 1834 after a particularly painful incident ¹⁰, ending up in remote Florence, Alabama. By the late 1840s, she would have to support the family by her writing, as her husband had become incapacitated by hypochondria. Mary Kelley, exploring the ambivalence that women writers, including Hentz, were experiencing at this time over marriage and writing careers, notes that Hentz's husband's incapacity eventually provided her the "rationalization that she needed," and that "her society understood," for moving her energies from the domestic sphere to the literary (167). It was more often the case, however, according to Kelly, that "literary careers" actually

extended the plane of women's domestic struggle. Finding themselves in a new role, the literary domestics nevertheless could not discard a traditional identity, and literary domesticity represented a new, public telling of old, private lives. (222)

Critics have discussed Hentz's apparent appropriation of

¹⁰ For additional discussion of this incident, see Kelley; Moss; and Papashvily.

material from her own marriage in her fiction.¹¹ Kelley focuses on Hentz's ambivalence, as recorded in her letters and diaries from the 1830s, over having "anchored" her "hopes on one goal," her expectations of marriage, and her "constant fear lest the anchor will fail" (Diary 27 April 1836, qtd. in Kelley 224).

However, as Mary Ryan points out, in the 1830s the cult of motherhood was still "immature" enough to remain "contaminated by memories of woman's larger social role"; many women at this time "transgressed the home's boundaries" and extended their "maternal vigilance" into such reform movements as temperance and abolitionism (Womanhood in America 180). In this connection, Elizabeth Moss points out, Hentz and the four other major southern domestic writers of the period ¹² directed their efforts to the cause of "sectional harmony," telling stories in which regional differences between North and South were reconciled through friendship and good will and sometimes marriage (27). Hentz had embarked on this effort with her first novel, Lovell's Folly, published in 1833. ¹³

¹¹ See Ellison and Kelley (217-249).

¹² The others were Augusta Evans, Caroline Gilman, Maria McIntosh, and Mary Virginia Terhune.

¹³ That novel was immediately withdrawn, however, out of concern that certain prominent Massachusetts citizens who had been unflatteringly appropriated as characters might recognize themselves. Hentz did not bring out another novel until 1846, but from 1850, when she took over the family provider role, until her sudden death of pneumonia in 1856, she produced nine novels and six collections of stories. (Kelley 14)

This agenda may help explain why Hentz is so respectful of Shakerism in "The Shaker Girl," even though the story endorses romantic love and companionate marriage. Even before the full support of her family fell upon her, she seems to have seen, despite her ambivalence, a "gift to be useful" in her fictional process. As Moss notes, she and her southern contemporary domestic fiction writers "seem to been more concerned with whether their fiction would sell than whether it was proper for them to write it" (27). Hentz is able to endorse Shakerism on inclusive grounds that would appeal to a Lady's Book readership, invested in concerns of home and family, while still providing a love story with a happy ending. This balance helps situate "The Shaker Girl" within her agenda of family reconciliation. It is the agenda of a republican mother rather than that of an aspiring artist such as Hawthorne who needs to reconcile his profession with popular notions of manliness and useful work. Still, however, she enacts her agenda through a process similar to Hawthorne's, by asserting her own presence (more insistently and didactically than he does) and by constructing her story, as we will see, through the finalizing schemes familiar to her readers.

While the Shaker community in Caroline Lee Hentz's "The Shaker Girl" is not identified, she lived for her first twenty-two years in Lancaster, Massachusetts, which shares town lines with both Shirley and Harvard (Horgan 127). As the

story opens, Roland Gray finds himself in a Shaker village on a Sunday morning and is invited by the elder to attend a worship service. He spies a beautiful girl among the dancing sisters, and runs out impulsively to speak to her when the Meeting is over. He is rebuked gently by the elder, and he resumes his journey home, where he tells his guardian Mr. Worthington and his older sister Lucy about the service and the lovely Shakeress. Roland and Lucy are orphans of "independent fortune" (51): Mr. Worthington's name connotes his kindness; Lucy has designs for Roland that include a marriage in keeping with their proud ancestral name.

Roland goes away to Europe on business for four years, and when he returns, he finds that Mr. Worthington has adopted a beautiful young girl named Grace. Roland and Lucy find that he has gone to the Shaker village for her, and that she is the girl Roland had seen on his visit there. All she knows of her past is that when she was very young, a good Shaker had found her dying mother in a poor cottage and agreed to her plea to take care of her child. She has a gold chain with a miniature of a man's face, but she does not know who it is.

Jealous Lucy blocks the growing love of Grace and Roland by making Grace believe that there must be something disgraceful about her unknown origins. Grace's dampened spirits, however, send her into a physical decline that resists all medical treatment, and she decides to go back to the Shakers, silently resolving to stay there until Roland

marries. She is cared for by a sister named Susan and regains some of her health in the peace and order of the village.

Roland, however, comes to see her and finds her with her apron full of "damask rose leaves" for distillation into rosewater (56) -- another link with the Harvard/Shirley community. He declares his love and dismisses her concerns about her "unworthiness (57)", but, fearing Lucy, she postpones a commitment.

Back at Mr. Worthington's, Grace is reunited with a long-lost uncle, Mr. Maitland, a rich merchant back from the East Indies. He recognizes Grace from her resemblance to her mother, identifies himself as the man in Grace's miniature, and affirms her good family origins. Grace learns from him that mother had been disowned by her friends and parents when she married Grace's handsome but dissolute father, who reduced her to poverty by his drunkenness and excesses. Though Maitland had offered to care for his sister and never marry himself if she would leave her husband, she had refused because she still loved him and hoped he would reform; this may be Hentz's own public telling of a private tale. Before leaving for the East Indies, Maitland had given his sister a large sum of money and the miniature. Her father, we now find out, had died a drunkard's death in the road and been found and buried by the Shakers, though the Shakers have spared Grace this knowledge.

Lucy must now welcome Grace as a sister, knowing that she

is of good family, though "she had scorned the alliance of the humble Shaker girl" (58). The story ends with Grace returning to visit the Shakers as a bride, with her handsome husband and two fine guardians.

"The Shaker Girl" has a contrived plot, much of which has little to do with the Shakers; from what we know of Hentz's composing practice, it could have been written very quickly (Hart 163). Nevertheless, the story is interesting both for its variety of inserted genres and also for the openness it maintains toward Shakerism, even as it endorses the marriage narrative. For example, there is the stamp of temperance literature in the account of Grace's father's decline and her mother's suffering. The American Temperance Society, established in Boston in 1826, had merged with other organizations to form the American Temperance Union in 1836, and as Reynolds points out, the literature detailing the evils of drink was becoming increasingly sensationalized at this time, as reform writers competed for readerships with police reports and court trial accounts.¹⁴ Most significant among the contributing voices in this story, however, are those of the Arabian Nights, the love story with a gothic touch, and the Sunday School lesson. These reconstructive devices place Shakerism both at a distance and within reach, still allowing space for Shakerism to make its claim for authenticity.

Shakerism is made exotic when Roland arrives at the

¹⁴ See Reynolds 54-91.

Shaker village and finds all the streets empty. Not yet knowing that everyone is at the Meeting House, he thinks he has "entered one of those cities described in the Arabian Nights, where some magician has suddenly converted the inhabitants into stone" (49). There is something exotic, too, in Hentz's description of the "obsolete fashion" of the clothes worn by the first Shakers he sees, an elder and a boy in the "ancient costume of their forefathers -- with large breeches fastened at the knees, with square, shining buckles, -- a coat, whose skirts were of surprising breadth, and a low-crowned hat [with] an enormous brim (49). As Roland wonders why no one in the nearby town has "mentioned the vicinity of this interesting establishment," the narrator comes in to observe that "to those who live within the reach of an object of curiosity, it loses its interest," and that "there are some who live, where the echoes of Niagara's eternal thunders are ringing in their ears, who have never gazed upon its foam" (49). This linking of a Shaker village and a natural wonder demonstrates again the view, already established in the early nineteenth century, of the Shakers as an "object of curiosity" and a tourist attraction.

This sense of difference is carried further in the gothic atmosphere of the Meeting House, especially when the worshippers come in: the women seem "pale and unearthly" with their "chill and ghost-like attire" and their cheeks "cold and colorless as marble" where he had been "wont to see ... the

roses of beauty and health" (50). When the aged chorus begin their hymn of praise, their voices sound "harsh and broken" to Roland, but the "devotion of their manner" sanctifies the music. Roland's own imagination as he watches the dance shows that he has drawn some of his own imaging patterns from his reading of gothic tales, but that these patterns are not enough to comprehend all that he is seeing:

[W]hen they gradually formed into a procession, marching two and two in a regular line, all joining in the wild and dissonant notes, then warming as they continued, changing the solemn march into the liveliest dance, clapping their hands simultaneously and shouting till the cold white walls resounded with strange hosannas, all the while, those hueless, passionless faces gliding by him, so still and ghastly mid their shroud-like garments, his brain began to reel, and he almost imagined himself attending the orgies of the dead, of resuscitated bodies, with the emotions of life, but without the living soul. (50)

Nevertheless, he also sees "a pervading solemnity and devotion" over all the worshippers, an "apparent abandonment of the whole world -- an anticipation of the loneliness and lifelessness of the tomb" (50). This atmosphere redeems the sight "from ridicule" and inspires "emotions kindred to awe" (50).

Hawthorne, as we saw in the letter to Louisa, offers a different view of the dance. In "The Shaker Bridal" he mentions it only briefly, saying detachedly that it is "believed to alienate the enthusiast from earth, and bear him onward to heavenly purity and bliss" (469). Hentz describes the dance in the language of the gothic horror story, not only

to thrill the reader but also to generate a sense that there is more to the scene than can be conveyed in language.¹⁵ The dissonant music, the accelerating movements, the disjunction between the expressionless faces and the animated bodies, and the reeling brain of the cultivated young man who does not know how to respond, all indicate a disorienting and subversive element in the performance.

Roland is spared having to resolve these dissonances, however, by having his thoughts diverted to love as soon as he sees Grace, identifying her with the "breath of summer redolent with a thousand perfumes" just outside the window, where the blue sky is "arching over his head" (50). His feeling for her is immediately naturalized because it is one of "those social affections which find such beautiful emblems" as Grace "in the works of nature" (50). When he finds her again in his own uncle's house, and hears what she can tell him of being taken in by the Shakers, and sees the gold chain and the miniature of the unknown man, he finds all the "mystery and romance" he could desire, as well as "innocence, beauty, and youth," and feels "as if he would gladly twine them together, and bind them around his heart, as 'all he guessed of heaven'" (54).

Roland's naturalizing of his own feelings for Grace becomes particularly apparent later in the story, when he

¹⁵ Both Davidson and Reynolds speak of the irrational and unexplainable as part of the lure of the gothic.

hears that she is leaving his guardian's house and going back to the Shakers. He finds it "'preposterous'":

'She, that sweet, lovely, spiritual creature, to be immersed again in their cold walls, and to wish it, and pine after it! By heavens! Lucy, if I could believe such a thing, I would go this moment and prevent the immolation. I will not deceive you; I do not care any longer for pride and empty-sounding names, and birth and parentage. It is ridiculous to think of such things in this republican country [emphasis mine]. Grace is equal to the highest, for she claims her birthright from the Almighty himself, and carries on her brow the spirit of heaven. ...' (56)

This impassioned speech echoes Roland's first thoughts on seeing Grace in her Shaker dance and feeling that her beauty elevates her above her surroundings. Sanctifying the attraction he feels for her, he thus finds her 'too spiritual' for a spiritual life, if that life keeps her away from him: she has been chosen, in his eyes, for the higher calling of earthly marriage.

The speech represents a curious conflation of discourses: democracy and sacred duty are brought to the service of sexual attraction and couched in the language of romance. A celibate life becomes equated with the gothic fate of being locked up in a convent -- a reference, perhaps, to some of the lurid anti-Catholic literature which evangelists of the period were generating, and which will also be discussed in the next chapter on gothicised responses to Shakerism.¹⁶ Ancestral pride, birth, and parentage (and ambition) as the bases of

¹⁶ See Louis J. Kern, An Ordered Love 56; Reynolds 64-65.

marriage are all part of a constricting Old World tradition -- though one, we remember, in which Lucy is deeply invested. Roland, however, insists that this tradition has no place in "this republican country." Thus, Roland is being not only romantic and heroic -- in keeping with his name -- but also American, in acting on his feelings for Grace. Liberating her from her nun-like seclusion behind the Shaker walls becomes an affirmation of democratic principles.

The language of the Shaker characters conveys a sense of Shaker life as an almost grave-like rest from the world. Nevertheless, it is ultimately affirming and contributes to a largely positive view of the Shakers -- again, making them appear both distant and familiar. The elder who chastises Roland for speaking to Grace softens his tone at Roland's "blush of ingenuous shame" and forgives him. "'You have been brought up,'" he says, "'midst the vanities of the world, and I pity you'" (50). Still, he goes on, "'my heart cleaves to you'" -- the language of marriage -- "'and when you become weary of those vanities, as you shortly will, come to us, and you will find that peace which the world can neither give nor take away'" (50). Such a peace is not necessarily equated with death, however. When Mr. Worthington takes Grace back to the Shakers, he gives her into the care of a kindly Shaker sister named Susan, from whom Grace senses a particular "sympathy" (56). Susan has "once known the gaieties of the world, and tasted its pleasures," but she has "taken up her

cross and followed her Saviour" after having had her heart "blighted and her hopes betrayed" (56) She persuades Mr. Worthington to leave Grace until the autumn, saying that she is "'weary of the world and wants rest'". However, the rest she offers promises warmth and healing:

'She shall dwell in my tabernacle, and share my pillow, and I will nourish and cherish her as my own flesh and blood.' She will not be compelled to join our worship, or follow our rites, for we now look upon her as our guest, our daughter in love, but not our sister in the spirit of the Lord. (56)

The story's scrupulous commitment to the accommodation of difference is established near the beginning by an early interjection from the narrator. When Roland first finds himself among the Shakers, we are given praise of them in terms that the Lady's Book readers could appreciate.

Had Roland known the Shakers' "incorruptible honesty," we are assured,

their unwearied industry, their trusting hospitality, their kindness and charity -- had he seen the pale sisterhood extending their cherishing cares to the children of orphanage and want, he would have been convinced that warm streams of living tenderness were flowing beneath the cold forms of their austere religion. (51)

And the story's closing, with its didactic Sunday School invocation of the Golden Rule along with its warning against the world's sorrows, reminds the reader that the Shaker life is one not only of seclusion and repose but also of active charity -- again, situating the Shakers both at a distance and at closer range. The Shakers refuse to accept compensation

from Grace's uncle for the care they have provided her:

'Do unto others, as we have done towards yours, replied these followers of our Saviour's golden rule. 'When you hear us reviled by the world, and our worship scorned, and our rites ridiculed, defend us if you can; and if one of the disciples of our creed should be in need of succor, do unto him as a brother, and we ask no more.' (58)

When Grace declares her happiness to Susan, the Shaker sister answers, "laying her hand solemnly" on Grace's head and wishing that she may "'long ... remain so'" (58). She enjoins Grace, however, to

'forget not, days of darkness may come, ... [and] the bridal garments may be changed for sack-cloth, and ashes be scattered over the garlands of love. Remember then, O Grace, there is a refuge from the woes and vanities of the world, where the spirit may wait in peace for its everlasting home.' (58)

Grace weeps, but smiles "through her tears," and "seated once more at Roland's side, felt as if darkness and sorrow could never be her portion" (58).

The word "felt" -- rather than "knew" -- may be significant, especially in the light of Hentz's own experience. Perhaps, isolated from friends, family, and past literary associates, in a small Alabama town, she remembered the Shaker neighbors of her childhood and saw their life in terms of this peace. The story has indeed shown that darkness and sorrow can be part of one's portion in the world, especially in connection with married life. Grace's first years in a family disrupted by drink have been "passed in ... "terror for her father's cruelty, and sorrow for her mother's woe" (54). Hentz may here be identifying with her own

children: Charles Hentz wrote in his unpublished biography that as a child he was often a "bewildered and frightened listener" to scenes between his parents over his father's jealous frenzies (Kelley 225). From this "tumultuous and fearful" atmosphere of her early childhood, Grace has been "[t]ransplanted to a scene, where everything breathed of peace and silence, where industry, neatness and order" were "heaven's first laws," and "where the voice of dissension was unheard, and the storms of passion unfelt" (54).

This is an outsider's view of a community life that has experienced its own share of dissension through the years,¹⁷ but it does point out by contrast that family life in the world is not necessarily safe and fulfilling. Grace's "sensibilities" are "repressed" by this Shaker life, and her "energies held down" -- though marriage can have these effects too -- and she "moved along her daily path a piece of beautiful and exquisite mechanism, but whose powerful springs had never been touched" -- a sexually charged image, implying that the right man will be able to release her sensibilities

¹⁷ Stein asserts that twentieth-century interpreters of Shakerism have "chosen to look selectively at the story of the United Society," and for that reason they have "created an illusion of homogeneity within the society that never existed" and "failed to perceive the 'fault lines that have flexed repeatedly under the stress and strain of controversy within the society.'" "Tensions," Stein points out, "existed between leaders and followers, men and women, young and old, easterners and westerners, progressives and traditionalists, intellectuals and charismatics," and, after Hentz's time, "between Canterbury and Sabbathday Lake" (429). As we have seen already, though, selective viewing of Shakers from the outside is not a new phenomenon.

and energies. She loves "the kind and gentle Shakers out of a "tranquil feeling" of "gratitude and trust", and moves on from this feeling to sexual love with Roland; however, as we have seen from her history, and from that of her author, conventional families cannot always provide tranquillity and trust and consistent occasions for gratitude.

Hentz's own troubled experience of married life may thus have left her open to other valid possibilities of human connection, including those offered by the Shaker life. Grace's conventional happy ending is contrasted to Susan's story, but Susan is nonetheless a sympathetic figure who finds a home with the Shakers and even a chance to be a mother to Grace there. The bitter, sterile sister -- or wicked step-sister -- figure, who tries to block the course of true love, is not Susan but the worldly Lucy, who is apparently driven to celibacy by her archaic and un-American notions of family pride rather than by disappointed affections. The story seems to be saying that coldness and sterility can be found outside Shaker communities, and goodness and caring within them.

There are sinister features in the story: Lucy's hold on the innocent Grace has a vampirish quality, though, again, the Shaker sister is able to counteract it; Mr. Worthington reverses the usual procedure by taking a child from the Shakers -- or rather a teenager, since Grace is about fifteen -- knowing that his ward has found her attractive. And Helen Waite Papashvily might comment on the male characters. "Few

whole men appeared in Mrs. Hentz's novels," Papashvily asserts (91), adding that in her writing Hentz "maimed the husband" (115). ¹⁸ Roland is not maimed, however. He is boyish and impulsive, but he is amenable to instruction, and he speaks out for love and democracy, even though he does not have to do much to win Grace, and never discovers Lucy's role in Grace's unhappiness. True, the the only father figure in the story who is not celibate is the handsome, profligate, alcoholic derelict, Ruth's father, who dies. Three celibate men -- the Shaker elder and the two generous bachelors, Mr. Worthington and Grace's uncle, Mr. Maitland, -- are the male characters who assume parental responsibilities and take them seriously.

In a similar vein, Hentz's story recognizes that the consequences of following the heart in the world are sometimes left in the hands of people who seek to live apart from the world. The celibate Shakers in this story are entrusted, not with taking in the weary failures of the world, but with caring for the children and burying the dead, two of the most sacred duties usually ascribed to the family. And Grace comes out of this story at home in two worlds, with a whole network of family ties connecting her to worldly and other-worldly life at the same time. This crossing of boundaries based on shared virtues and family feeling may presage Hentz's

¹⁸ Papashvily's book develops her claim that the domestic writers are working out their own issues with their ambivalent positions as women and writers by diminishing their male characters.

increasingly problematic commitment in her novels to forge similar family connections between the republic's areas of difference, North and South.¹⁹

Hawthorne, the struggling artist, puts his reconstructive strategies to use in this Shaker story to privilege and preserve the world's idea of love as enacted in privatized companionate marriage. To do this, he must focus on difference; he must present celibate Shakerism as an ultimately invalid alternative to worldly family structures, however compelling in some of its aspects. Hentz, the republican mother, puts some of the same reconstructive strategies to use in her Shaker story to reconcile apparent differences within the national family. To do this, she must focus on commonality; she must present those aspects of Shakerism which her readers would be likely to endorse. Hawthorne's stories close the Shakers away behind layer after layer of literary allusion. Hentz shows the Shakers as both distant and approachable, different and accommodating, celibate and loving. The two stories offer glimpses of what Shakers and Shaker villages might have been like in the 1830s; at the same time, however, they offer insights into the ways

¹⁹ Moss points out that Hentz's portrayals of life in the South in her novels, especially Marcus Warland; or The Long Moss Spring (1852) and The Planter's Northern Bride (1854), like those of the other Southern domestic writers, became increasingly at odds with the authors' "vested interests in national union" (60) and in fact eventually contributed to the very "ideological polarization of America which they sought to prevent" (62).

that authoring imaginations were bringing their own interpretive agendas and reconstructive strategies to bear upon the Shakers in those years. Any sense of the Shakers to be derived from these stories must take account of these strategies and of the public and private issues that direct and shape them.

CHAPTER II

"LOVE, ENTERTAINED ON SHAKER GROUND":

SHAKERISM AND THE GOTHIC

In "The Shaker Bridal," Hawthorne uses Shakerism in a seduction plot to warn his readers that ambition may be fatal to love; in so doing, he also gives the Shakers a more explicitly gothic treatment than in "The Canterbury Pilgrims." Thus the story, which appeared in the Token for 1838, provides a bridge between the previous chapter's discussion of Hawthorne's and Hentz's appropriations of Shakerism into agendas of career authorship and this chapter's exploration of gothicism as a formalizing scheme for both exploiting and controlling Shakerism's subversive potential.

Gothic narratives, according to Lawrence Buell, are distinguished by certain "central motifs," which include "terror", "entrapment" (typically localized in an isolated mansion over which there is a fight for ownership or control)," the "supernatural (or appearance of the same)," and "the melodramatic struggle between male villain and female victim (with purity, power, and property usually all at stake)" (352). Gothic fictions also often have sudden, mysterious departures of characters; ghosts that sometimes turn out to be explainable; an old-world (frequently Catholic)

foreignness of setting; and reflections of emotional states in scenery and atmosphere. ¹

In the fictions in this chapter, Shakerism is cast in gothic terms as a victimizer of women. This portrayal holds true whether one character enacts the role of gothic villain or whether the Shaker movement itself is held accountable for a woman's suffering. After discussing "The Shaker Bridal" and some earlier gothic renditions of Shakerism, I will consider some aspects of Shaker life and some events and cultural factors that would invite a gothic reading of Shakerism. I will then discuss two non-Shaker fictions and a love narrative within a Shaker apostate account, all of which use gothic elements to treat issues of love and power in a Shaker

¹ These features of the gothic novel are synthesized from Abrams 78-79. Abrams cites Eino Railo, The Haunted Castle (1927); Montagu Summers, The Gothic Quest (1938); Lowry Nelson, Jr., "Night Thoughts on the Gothic Novel," in the Yale Review 52 (1963) and in Pastoral and Romance (ed. Eleanor T. Lincoln (1969); G.R. Thompson, ed., The Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism (1974); William Patrick Day, In the Circles of Fear and Desire (1985).

Abrams also cites feminist criticism that explores the way gothic fiction has "challenged the sexual hierarchy and values of a male-dominated culture" (79), particularly Juliann E. Fleenor, ed., The Female Gothic (1983) and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic (1979).

Gothic fiction began in England with Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto in 1765. The genre was developed further in such works as William Beckford's Vathek (1786); the immensely popular novels of Ann Radcliffe, including The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) and The Italian (1797); and Maria Edgeworth's Castle Rackrent (1800). Radcliffe's influence in the shaping of American gothic fiction will be discussed later in this chapter.

The subversive potential of the gothic novel has been noted by Cathy Davidson in Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America (1986); see Note 6.

setting. The two fictions which will receive the most attention-- Daniel Pierce Thompson's "The Shaker Lovers" and the anonymous "The Shakeress," both published in 1848 -- reflect the interest of worldly writers in secrets of love and hidden abuses of power among Shakers who have, supposedly, taken up the cross against fleshly desires. The love narrative in Hervey Elkins's apostate book, Fifteen years in the Senior Order of Shakers: A Narration of Facts, Concerning That Singular People, published in 1853, also employs features of the gothic to explore issues of love and authority "on Shaker ground" (112), but from a perspective of someone who has lived both as a Shaker and in the 'world outside.'

Like "The Shaker Bridal," these three texts use what Boone calls the "defamiliarizing traits of the gothic" in varying degrees to produce a "psychodramatic rendering of the torments of sexual victimization less likely to be ventured in strictly realistic fiction" (99-100). At the same time, however, they help to illustrate what Buell calls the "provincial gothic" in their use of both a gothic element and an American regional atmosphere. Buell identifies "provincial gothic" with New England because, he asserts, "New England's aesthetic utilitarianism tended to encourage its writers to naturalize gothic as moral parable or sociocultural analysis, rather than simply as psychological thriller"; he also notes that New England fiction "matured" through the nineteenth century "during an age when regional consciousness was on the

upswing at home," and that "New Englanders found it easy to gothicize their regional heritage by invoking Puritan superstition" (353). In fact, he finds the "most distinctive thematic ingredient" in New England gothic to be the "perception of Puritan culture as inherently grotesque" (359). "The Shaker Lovers" and "The Shakeress" shift the designation of grotesque from the Puritans to the Shakers; Elkins's supposedly factual love narrative offers a far more complex interplay of gothic elements and New England Shaker life.

In "The Shaker Bridal" the victimized woman is Martha Pierson, who is entrapped into becoming a Shaker by her devotion to Adam Colburn, the man she has wanted to marry since childhood. Adam, who is thus both lover and villain, has kept postponing their union as he seeks to improve his condition and prospects in the world. After trying and failing at many occupations, he brings Martha with him to a Shaker village, where their combined skills and talents bring them status and authority. When the elder, Father Ephraim, is dying, they are appointed to assume joint leadership in the society in a ceremony similar to a worldly wedding. In a reversal of the usual wedding homily, the dying elder bids them "join hands" as "brother and sister in spiritual love," to open their gates to "all who would give up the iniquities of the world," and to "receive the little children, that they may never learn" the "miserable lesson" of the "vanity of earth"; he blesses their "labors" to hasten on the time when

"the mission of Mother Ann shall have wrought its full effect,-- when children shall no more be born and die," and the sun shall at last "go down, nevermore to rise on a world of sin and sorrow!" (475) For Adam, this ceremony represents a goal achieved. He withdraws his hand from Martha's and folds his arms "with a sense of satisfied ambition" (476). Martha, however, grows "paler and paler," until, "like a corpse in its burial clothes," she sinks "down at the feet of her earthly lover; for, after many trials firmly borne, her heart could endure its desolate agony no longer" (476).

The story is an ironic inversion of the seduction plot, because Martha is drawn by her lover, not into an illicit sexual relation, but into a denial of her physical nature and a union with death.² The names of the bride and groom -- Adam the generational father and Martha the self-effacing caregiver -- unite them ironically to a domestic ideal they will never achieve, and the Shaker village they enter together is called Goshen after the Promised Land, the end of the

² Hawthorne had used a fusion of marriage and death in the Token already, in his 1835 story, "The Wedding Knell." An aged bachelor is to marry a twice-widowed lady who rejected him in their youth for a match more advantageous to her family. The groom seeks to punish the bride by appearing at the crowded church wrapped in a shroud and accompanied by attendants in mourning, to the ringing of the funeral bell. The bride, however, clasps the groom's hand and urges that they marry "even at the door of the sepulchre" (21), and the groom realizes he has been maddened by despair. They clasp hands, finding their "earthly affection changed into something as holy as religion" and the "organ's peal of solemn triumph" -- a sexual image that may not be ironic -- drowns the wedding knell. Thus the story affirms the companionate sexual model of love, even at the edge of death. (Twice-Told Tales)

journey for Adam and Eve that began with the loss of Eden.

Martha, it is true, cooperates to some degree in her entrapment; while waiting for Adam, we are told, she "might have been the wife of a man who sat among the senators of his native state" (472). Adam, too, could have "won the hand, as he had unintentionally won the heart, of a rich and comely widow" (472). Neither, however, "desired good fortune save to share it with the other" (472). Our sympathies as readers, nonetheless, are engaged on her side. She, we are told, "would probably have consented to unite her fate" with Adam's "and, secure of the bliss of mutual love, would patiently have awaited the less important gifts of fortune"; Adam, however, has been "loath to relinquish the advantages a single man possesses for raising himself in the world" (471).

Another of the story's ironies is that Adam must actually leave the world in order to raise himself in its terms. He must go to the Shakers, whose "converts", according to the narrator, are "oftener driven within its hospitable gates by worldly misfortune than drawn thither by fanaticism, and are received without inquisition as to their motives" (472). Here, Adam himself tells the assembled elders, he himself "'came as a man might come to a tomb, willing to lie down in its gloom and coldness, for the sake of its peace and quiet'" (473). We are told, also, that the Shakers are "generally below the ordinary standard of intelligence," a factor that enables Adam and Martha to rise within their ranks (472).

Thus, while the story makes Adam into what Millington would call a dangerously "transcendent individual" (7), one whose ambition even costs the life of the woman who loves him, Hawthorne has placed this transcendent individual in a Shaker village, and clothed that village in an atmosphere of mediocrity, death and sterility. As Rita K. Gollin notes, both of Hawthorne's Shaker stories make a plea for love as a condition for "self-fulfillment and self-transcendence" ("Hawthorne ... Shakers" 64); "The Shaker Bridal," in particular, "judges" the Shakers' "commitment to celibacy as a distortion and ultimately a destruction of life" (62), offering Adam his desired goals only at the cost, to him and to Martha, of true "self-fulfillment" and "the sustaining ties of 'familiar' love" (64). Nevertheless, by situating the consequences of Adam's ambition in a Shaker village, construed as a tomb, Hawthorne is able to point out the dangers of ambition in a way that would not alienate those of his readers who might be caught up in career narratives of their own.

Still, the reader's sense of Martha's victimization is indeed enhanced by Hawthorne's use of the Shaker setting. We see her looking "thin and pale, as a Shaker sister almost invariably is," with something of the "corpse-like appearance which the garb of the sisterhood is so well-calculated to impart" (470). We are invited to participate in her fear when she takes her vows before the elders gathered around Father Ephraim's death bed, shuddering as she sees "something awful

or horrible in her situation or destiny" (474). It requires "a more than feminine strength of nerve" for her to look at the "exalted and famous" men of the sect, especially since they have all "overcome their natural sympathy with human frailties and affections" (474).

While these men are not Martha's personal victimizers, they represent the life to which Adam has brought her. One, we are told, had brought his wife and children with him to the Shakers but "never, from that hour, had spoken a fond word to the former, or had taken his best-loved child on his knee"; one had "been enabled -- such was his gift of holy fortitude -- to leave" his family "to the mercy of the world"; one, "a man of about fifty," had lived "from infancy in a Shaker village, and was said never to have clasped a woman's hand in his own, and to have no conception of a closer tie than the cold fraternal one of the sect"; old Father Ephraim, the "most awful character of all," had been "a dissolute libertine" in his youth, until he was "converted by Mother Ann herself, and had partaken of the wild fanaticism of the early Shakers," even, according to tradition, having had her sear his "heart of flesh with a red hot iron before it could be purified of earthly passions" (474). It is understandable that Martha's own heart quails when she looks from these men "to the calm features of Adam Colburn" (475), no doubt seeing in the elders what Adam might become.

Seymour Gross connects this aspect of the story with

Hawthorne's reading of Thomas Brown's 1812 apostate book, An Account of the People Called Shakers: Their Faith Doctrine, and Practice, to Which is Affixed a History of their Rise and Progress to the Present Day, which Hawthorne checked out of the Salem Athenaeum on 27 August 1831.³ Stein finds Brown's observations, in "contrast with the judgments rendered by other early apostates"⁴ to be "not jaded or overtly biased" (54). Nevertheless, Brown's book does contain some stories from the early days of the church that might serve to activate an imagination nurtured on gothic tales -- a phenomenon that Mrs. Child deplores in The Mother's Book, where she warns that the "necessity of fierce excitement in reading is a sort of intellectual intemperance" which, "like bodily intoxication, ... produces weakness and delirium" (93). Gross attributes the harsh portraits of the elders in "The Shaker Bridal" to this influence (461-62). Brown's book includes accounts of the elders stripping naked and dancing, and of "corporeal punishment", including whipping (Brown 335). Brown scrupulously acknowledges that the "last instances" of these

³ Gross cites Marjorie Kesselring on Hawthorne's reading for this information (Gross 400).

Stein calls Brown "perhaps the most perceptive and informative apostate of the early nineteenth century" (54). He spent six years in the Watervliet, New York, community (formerly Niskeyuna), and was impressed with the Shakers' "'order, neatness, peace, love, and union'" (qtd. in Stein 54). He left over the issue of having to obey the elders without question.

⁴ Valentine Rathbun (1781); Amos Taylor (1782); and Benjamin West (1783).

practices were "about the year 1793" (335). He also pointed out "the danger of investing individuals with power, either in church or state" (219) and went on to show what he saw as correspondences between Shaker practices and those of the "Church of Rome, after its degeneracy" (222) including the absolute authority of the elders who "suffer kneeling before them" and make resisting their authority a "deadly crime" (224), and the suppression of books and learning, out of the belief that "'All authors have been in the dark'" (226-227). He admits, however, that after discussing these concerns with the elders he was satisfied that they were motivated in these practices by a spirit of "humility", "love and tenderness," unlike the early popes and monarchs who lived in "pride, vanity, pomp, and splendour" and in "hatred and cruelty" (234).

Whether or not these accounts coincided with his own current impressions of the Shakers from visiting them at Canterbury, such details would predictably encourage non-Shakers to reconstruct Shakerism through a gothic finalizing scheme, and to bring other details of this gothic scheme to bear on their further personal authoring of Shakers. Images connecting Shaker men in power with repression and sterility would make it all the more easy to view Shakerism as victimizing women by denying both their need for love and their prescribed self-fulfillment as wives and mothers,

whether or not they were physically entrapped.⁵ "The Shaker Bridal," as already noted, problematizes the gothic scheme by having the lover and the oppressor the same person. Still we do have a woman entrapped and sexually wronged in this story, caught up in a power play in which, like a true gothic heroine, she has literally everything to lose.

These associations with the Shaker setting allow Hawthorne to gothicize and thus defamiliarize the male career narrative in order to demonstrate its potential to victimize women. However, when he does so by equating that narrative with Shakerism, he achieves this defamiliarization at Shakerism's expense. In order to achieve his moral parable through his situating of gothicism in New England, he must make Shakerism represent sterility and denial. The story cannot allow that the "fraternal hand of the sect" is ever anything other than "cold" (474); nor can it recognize that Shaker societies by the 1830s had dual ministries including women, who did not necessarily die of broken hearts upon

⁵ For discussions of women's lives under Shakerism, see Campbell; Chmielewski et al.; Foster; Humez; and Procter-Smith. Recent scholarship in this area has sought to revise the popular notion that Shakers necessarily aspired to sexual equality at every stage of their history. Women's and men's work, except at administrative levels, were kept separate; women's rounds of tasks did not vary much from what they would have been doing in the world, though the conditions of shared work often made the tasks more manageable. Also, some of these historians report that some Shaker brothers did not always unquestioningly accept female authority figures. Shaker life in some places and at some times may thus have had its confining aspects for women, even if it did not entrap them in the gothic sense. See also my Introduction, n14.

accession to their authority.⁶ Thus, like "The Canterbury Pilgrims," "The Shaker Bridal", even with its potentially subversive gothic atmosphere, still does not challenge conventional narratives of marriage and work.

The perception of the Shaker threat in gothic terms goes back at least to Amos Taylor's 1781 apostate account, A Narrative of the Strange Principles, Conduct, and Character of the People Known by the Name of Shakers; Whose Errors have Spread in Several Parts of North America, but are Beginning to Diminish and Ought to be Guarded Against. Taylor begins with the observation that because of the "infant state of power in America" since the beginning of the revolution, "every effort to undermine" the new nation's "original constitution" posed a threat to the "foundations of Independency" (3). "To see a body," he goes on, "of more than two thousand people, having no will of their own, but governed by a few Europeans conquering their adherents into the most unreserved subjection, argues some infatuating power" (3). Taylor traces this power to the "very extraordinary skill" the Shakers "have acquired in hearing confessions" (4). The ultimate faith and trust in leaders which this highly skilled confessional practice engenders results in a loss of self in converts, who are "made to believe themselves to be seen through and through in the gospel glass of perfection by their teachers" (5). The

⁶ Esther Ferrin was eldress at Canterbury when Hawthorne visited there in 1831, having succeeded Mother Hannah Goodrich.

transparency figures again in the sixteenth item on Taylor's list of Shaker doctrines: that giving up the "sensual or earthly relation to Adam" makes their followers "transparent in their ideas in the bright and heavenly visions of God" (9).

This danger of submission to another power, and of having to relinquish both substance and will, invites comparison not only to witchcraft (17) but also to the kind of power struggles that figure in gothic novels. Accounts of Mother Ann often speak of a loss of individual will in her presence. Jemima Blanchard, for example, recalls going to a house where Mother Ann was, and having Mother Ann look at her "with such a pleasant heavenly countenance, that it absorbed my whole soul, so that I scarcely heard what my companions said to me" (quoted in Sears, Gleanings 53). Blanchard goes on to tell how Mother Ann "then took me into meeting, and it seemed to me all day that her eyes were upon me, and that she could see through me" (53). Her account of Mother Ann's pursuit of her --letting her go, calling her back with increasingly deep questions, and then holding her bodily until "her arms were around my waist, and we were both on our knees" and "I shook so that the windows shattered, but I did not know what it was for some moments" (55) -- bears out Taylor's observations on how Shakers led their converts "by several degrees into the belief of their tenets, and of consequence into the several exercises of their worship" (10). Such accounts of Mother Ann's

capacity, as a truly transcendent individual, to subdue another person's will by the power of her presence and personality could certainly be heard and read in the gothic sense, as narratives of entrapment and victimization.

Taylor's account appeared in 1782; Mother Ann died in 1784. By the 1790s, the gothic novel was emerging as a popular genre in Britain and America.⁷ Ann Radcliffe, author of The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) and The Italian (1797), was the best-selling English writer of the eighteenth century (Davidson 220). She was also widely read on this side of the Atlantic and was imitated as early as 1800 by Mrs. Sarah Keating Wood, whose Julia and the Illuminated Baron (1800), according to Buell, launched her career as "New England's most prolific writer of Radcliffean gothic fiction" (25-26). Hawthorne, Reynolds notes, "devoured" the works of Ann Radcliffe, Monk Lewis, and Henry Mathurin (250), all of whom were sufficiently popular for Mrs. Child to list as "dangerous" in The Mother's Book (93). Buell traces the origins of the American gothic to Edgeworth's Castle Rackrent, Sir Walter Scott's The Bride of Lammermoor, and James Hogg's Confessions of a Justified Sinner; the Anglo-Irish (Edgeworth) and Anglo-Scottish (Scott and Hogg) atmosphere in these texts, Buell observes, helped contribute to the regional flavor of gothic fiction as adopted in America. Reynolds notes that

⁷ Davidson cites Montague Summers's A Gothic Bibliography as providing a "good indication of the vast popularity of the Gothic genre, especially between 1790 and 1820" (306n18).

Charles Brockden Brown "fused Gothic horror with graphic descriptions of city slums" in Arthur Mervyn (1803) and Ormond (1799), "in a manner that anticipated later urban expose novels" (80), and that demonstrates an early application of gothic elements in describing current real-life conditions.

Cathy Davidson points out that the earlier American versions of the gothic novel in the 1790s, especially as developed by Brown, had a strongly dialogic subversive quality; many of the early American novelists, she notes, "sensed" with "remarkable acuity" both the "promise and the problems" to be encountered in the emerging American "ideology of individualism" (218).⁸ We saw some of this in "The Shaker Bridal," though, ironically, Adam's self-centered individualism, pursued at Martha's expense, brings him into a communal society.

The two fictions in this chapter, however, "The Shaker Lovers" and "The Shakeress," come from the 1840s and 50s, and use their gothic elements more in Buell's sense of the provincial, to depict local manners (353). Elkins, however, though he claims to be writing a "narration of facts" and not

⁸ Davidson argues that the original American gothic novel "trains its sights" on the "nascent empowerment" of the rising middle class (218). Because in "plot and characterization," she goes on, the genre was "less concerned with dialectical extremes than with the ramifications of polarized ideologies within the workaday world" (218), the early American gothic texts of Brockden Brown and others are capable of registering counter-testimonies as well as dominant ideologies. Her chapter "Early American Gothic: The Limits of Individualism" includes a detailed analysis of Arthur Mervyn as metafiction.

a novel, makes more use of the gothic narrative's capacity to enable an exploration of the "limitations of the individual consciousness" and issues of freedom and control (Davidson 220). Buell might categorize his work, as he does Elizabeth Stoddard's The Morgesons, Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, and Dickens' Great Expectations, as examples of the mid-nineteenth century's "commingling of gothic devices with representational realism" (354). And whether used to thrill, to depict regional manners, or to offer a moral parable, the gothic genre offered writers and readers a whole new vocabulary of images for vicarious, reconstructed experiences.

We can understand, then, how certain known and rumored features of Shaker life would appear to lend themselves readily to gothic conceptualizing: its monastic rule and order; its ritual, strange to outsiders; its distinctive dress, dating back to an earlier time; its investment in a distinctive architectural and spatial representation, in keeping with the way the standard theme of entrapment was "typically imaged" in "symbolic houses that function as extensions of familial and cultural constraints" (Buell 359); its tradition of authority and submission.

The much publicized apostate cases of Eunice Chapman and Mary Dyer in the early nineteenth century had helped enhance a popular impression of Shakerism as victimizing woman by denying her nature. Both women had entered Shaker societies with their husbands and children, Chapman in Watervliet, New

York, in 1811 and Dyer in Enfield, New Hampshire, around 1810. Both left the Shakers and undertook lawsuits to reclaim their children from them, and both published books to gain public sympathy. Chapman won her case, but Dyer lost hers. Dyer's apostate book Portraiture of Shakerism, first published in 1822, includes an impressive martialing of personal testimonies to acts of lewdness, gambling, drunkenness, and cruel and sadistic punishments by Shakers, going back to Ann Lee and her first followers (Stein 85-86; Andrews, People Called Shakers 208-210).⁹ Like her earlier A Brief Statement of the Sufferings of Mary Dyer, Occasioned by the Shakers, published in 1818, this undertaking was prompted, as Priscilla Brewer points out, by "real grievances" (92). She had unwillingly followed her husband to the Shakers, under the stipulation that if she chose to leave after a year she could take the two youngest of their five children with her. When she did leave, she was prevented by the elders even from saying good-by to any of her children.

While she claimed that her books and pamphlets, printed

⁹ Stein reports that twentieth-century scholar Clarke Garrett sees a religious logic in some of the behaviors attributed to Shakers in early apostate accounts: dancing naked could celebrate purity; drinking liquor could bring on ecstatic visions. Other accusations in apostate accounts included exorcism and acetic behaviors, which, according to Garrett, could be a "a form of spiritual healing"; and destruction of books and property, which could signify a "rejection of the material world" (Stein 31). As cited by Stein, Garrett attributes these excesses, if they occurred, to a state of frenzy among the Shakers in the last years before Ann Lee's death, which subsequently died down.

and reprinted over the next thirty years, were aimed at getting her children back (Brewer 92), Stein attributes a "larger intention" to her efforts: "to permanently discredit the society's founders beliefs and practices, and its present leadership" (86). Whatever her range of motives, and whatever the degree of truth or falsehood in her charges and evidence, her case gave lively reading to a public with a new taste for trial accounts and police reports ¹⁰, especially when the Shakers published a refutation from her husband Joseph.¹¹ Her suit before the New Hampshire Legislature to determine the Shakers unfit as guardians for children, which was finally settled in favor of the Shakers in 1849, brought her even more attention as a woman whose motherhood, which constituted her female identity, had been violated by the Shakers.¹²

One public response to these reports of victimizing was the implication of Shakerism in new divorce laws. While Shaker societies at this time frequently refused admission to married couples, and would accept no one who had not separated justly and lawfully from a partner (L. Kern, cited in Riley 68), legislatures in several states were finding it necessary to

¹⁰ Reynolds describes this taste (161-179), though he does not discuss Shaker apostate literature.

¹¹ Elkins dismisses both Dyers' accounts as "a complete medley of puerile and equivocal affidavits, entirely impertinent and needless on the part of the man, false and ridiculous upon the part of the woman" (58).

¹² For a discussion of these cases and the Shakers' response, see Stein, 85-86.

enact new laws making it grounds for divorce if a partner left to join a celibate society. Kentucky had passed such legislation in 1812, Maine in 1830, New Hampshire in 1842, and Massachusetts in 1850 (L. Kern, cited in Riley, 68). Thus, as Glenda Riley points out, Shakers in these decades were unintentionally expanding the "list of grounds for divorce" and helping to "escalate the growing controversy regarding divorce in the United States" (68).

In these same decades, as Louis J. Kern observes, it was becoming increasingly common to criticize utopian experiments, including Shakerism ¹³ in the same way that Catholic communalism had been criticized the decade before, as dangerous to woman's nature. Women's innocence, according to this reasoning, made them vulnerable to "misguided religious zeal," which would in turn make them fall prey to vicious masters (56). In order to save women from this fate, anti-Catholic exposes such as George Bourne's Lorette (1833), the anonymous Female Convents (1834), and Rebecca Reed's Six Months in a Convent (1835) had sought to portray religious

¹³ The other utopian ventures at this time which were most controversial in terms of sexual practices were the Oneida Community and the Mormons. The Oneida Community, led by John Humphrey Noyes, had its origins in Vermont in the 1830s and was officially established at Oneida, New York, in 1848. Oneidans practices "complex marriage" which involved a highly structured pattern of sharing sexual partners, selective breeding of children, and male continence to avoid unwanted pregnancy. The Mormons began their sanctioned polygamy in 1841. For comparisons of these societies, see Foster and Louis J. Kern. See also selections on these and other communities in Chmielewski et al.

communities -- especially convents -- as scenes of violation and depravity (Reynolds 64-65).¹⁴

Kern attributes such tactics to a male fear that women would be tempted away from patriarchal families by the domestic and sexual alternatives that communal societies offered. He also asserts that the "central motif" of "outraged womanhood, the true woman, inveigled, seduced, and enchained" -- an image inherited from the "gothic, epistolary novels of the eighteenth century" -- was passed on from the anti-Catholic literature of the 1830s to the anti-utopian criticism of the next decade (56).

The 1840s also saw an increasing apostate presence among the world's people to spread, corroborate, or deny rumors or secret corruptions among the Shakers. Shaker communities, as Priscilla Brewer and Stephen Stein both note, have always had trouble keeping their young (Brewer 223-24, Stein 146). Love was not necessarily the only reason for youthful apostasy -- as far back as 1796, Stein recounts, an observer had commented on the Shakers' restriction on their young people's "learning, leisure, personal liberties, and "'natural affections'" (49). In the 1820s and early 1830s, the Shakers had experienced a

¹⁴ One of the best-selling of these works was Awful Disclosures of ... the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal (1836), which sold 300,000 copies by the time of the Civil War. Published under a pseudonym, Maria Monk, it was actually the work of four evangelical clergymen and an ex-nun, and, according to Reynolds, uses anti-Catholicism as a pretext for portraying hidden lust and sadism, portraying the priests at a Canadian nunnery as "inexhaustible lechers" and murderers of babies (261).

waning of energy as those who had been caught up in Ann Lee's fervor -- however excessive in some of its manifestations -- grew old and died. New members, often brought in by hard economic times rather than religious conviction, did not enter the Shaker life with the same zeal, and a disproportion of younger to older members made it sometimes difficult to fill leadership positions with qualified people.

Another reason for this increased apostate presence in the world was the aftermath of the period of intense spiritual awakening. This brief era, known as Mother's Work, began in the Watervliet, New York, community in 1837 and soon spread to the other communities. During this period, which lasted into the mid-1840s, scores of Shakers reported abundant gifts and messages from the spirit world, many from Mother Ann herself. These gifts were expressed by their recipients in ecstatic songs, inspired spirit drawings, speaking in tongues, and movements that pantomimed the receipt of spiritual gifts -- opening spiritual treasure chests, putting on rich spiritual garments, partaking of rare spiritual fruits and cups of blessing. Public worship was discontinued during this time. Elkins was at Enfield during these events, and describes them in his book. However, though many new members joined the society at this time, many left in the later 1840s when this enthusiasm had played itself out.

Public interest in the Shakers often centered on questions of love and power in the communities, and David

Lamson addresses this curiosity in his book, Two Years' Experience Among the Shakers, published in 1848. "It is impossible for young people to crucify all the natural affections," he writes;

And although all private intercourse between the brethren and sisters is strictly forbidden, and every guard that possibly can be, is placed in the way of it; yet the young brethren and sisters will steal private interviews, fall in love, and go off to the world. (191-192)

Lamson, who took his wife and children to the Shakers at Hancock, Massachusetts, in 1843 and remained until 1845, goes on to say that he is "fully persuaded", from his own observation, "that a very large portion of the common members are honest in their belief of this doctrine" of celibacy, and "faithful in its practice" (196). He likewise acknowledges that he has "obtained no proof" that the members of "the Lead" were "guilty of a criminal indulgence of the flesh" (198). Still, he claims that he "cannot speak so positively" of these leaders' innocence", since they, too, are "men, and women, with the same affections, and passions, as other men, and women" (198). Not only that, he continues, "if they are disposed to indulge the 'carnal knowledge,' they can do so, and defy detection" (198).

Lamson assures his readers that he and his family were well-treated by them. Nevertheless, he compares Shakerism to slavery (171, 175, 176, 184), labels the Shaker covenant a "bond of a fraudulent agreement" and "a means of obtaining goods under false pretence" (173), and calls Shaker confession

"as thorough an inquisition as ever the Catholics did at Spain or Rome" (167), raising again the concerns of Rathbun and Brown over loss of selfhood under Shakerism through unquestioning submission and obedience.

All these conditions, within and outside Shaker societies, would affect the ways that people formed their impressions of Shakers and Shakerism in the mid- to late 1840s. Apostate reports of practices at Shaker villages -- some true, some exaggerated, some formerly but no longer true, some false -- lent themselves to interpretations of Shakerism which centered on violated womanhood, whether the violation involved physical or mental abuse or deprivation of maternal rights. Persistent comparisons to the Inquisition helped maintain a connection in people's minds between American Shakerism and Old World abuses of power in religion's name, especially when such abuses involved a corrupt male authority figure and a female victim. It is therefore not surprising that some writers and readers would have seen a gothic potential in these images, and would apply gothic formal elements to their impressions of Shakerism.

The first fictional portrayal of this gothic entrapment in a Shaker context had been in Catharine Maria Sedgwick's 1824 novel, Redwood, A Tale, in which one of the many stories interwoven to "denote the passing character and manners of the present time and place" (vii) concerns a young Hancock Shaker sister named Emily who suffers under the machinations of Elder

Reuben Harrington. Emily and her aunt, Susan, who is also a Shaker, have been permitted to attend a funeral in their worldly family, under Elder Reuben's chaperonage, and Emily has realized that she and her childhood friend James Lenox are in love, though her loyalty to Susan holds her to the Shakers. Back at the village Emily begins to pine, and sanctimonious Elder Reuben, who bears "no marks of having disobliged the instincts of nature by any mortifications of the flesh" (1:95), seizes upon her weakness to work out a diabolical plan for absconding with her and a large sum of the community's money.

He gets his chance to enact his plan when he intercepts a letter from James and learns the cause of Emily's pining. He writes her a passionate letter, signs it as if from James, and takes it to her, telling her he understands her feelings and will take her to James himself in secret. Emily is surprised at his willingness to help her. She knows she can "declare her resolution to leave the society," but even though no-one is "ever detained by force," she feels she has "not the courage necessary to persevere against the deliberate opposition of the society -- to withstand the counsel, rebuke or sneer that she must expect from the different characters that composed the community" (2:64). Also, she dreads hurting Susan either by leaving her openly or by deceiving her (2:64). She does acquiesce, however, and through his ruse, Reuben is able to carry her away to the woods, where he keeps her prisoner in

a hut, guarded by a drunken Indian and a fierce dog, while he goes to Albany to work his scheme at the bank.

Both plans fall through; Emily is rescued by her friends and relations, and the bankers see through Reuben's plot. Rather than have him arrested, they return him to the Shakers, who dispossess him of all "but the clothes that covered him" and send him out "to wander upon the earth, despised and avoided, enduring all the misery of unsuccessful and unrepented guilt" (2:128).

Sedgwick's narrator hopes to be "suspected" of speaking "justice" and not "panegyric" in noting the Shakers' hospitality, their "alms to the needy," and the "generous and enlightened principles" which their faith includes, "however absurd and indefensible its peculiarities" (2:40). Still, Redwood, which deserves a fuller study than can be given here ¹⁵ shows a displacement onto Shakerism of what Buell calls the

¹⁵ Susan's account of her own conversion bears interesting comparison with Jemima Blanchard's testimony; Susan's account of her own disappointed love is psychologically complex. Redwood is dedicated to Sedgwick's friend William Cullen Bryant, who reviewed it for the North American Review 20 (1825). McAdams cites Robert E. Spiller et al. for the Shakers' response to the novel: they felt it treated them with "'irreverence and derision'" (290; McAdams 58). Sedgwick notes in her Preface that the "sketch" of the Shakers has been "drawn from personal observation," is "deemed just" (she does not say by whom), and that "it is hoped would not be thought offensive"; it "would have been withheld," she insists, had she "supposed that it would wound the feelings even of a single individual of that obscure sect" (x). However, she sees "little danger that these light volumes will ever find their way into a sanctuary from whose pale the frivolous amusements of the 'world's people' are carefully excluded (x).

"most distinctive thematic ingredient" of Puritan culture as appropriated for the gothic -- that it is "inherently grotesque" (359). "Grotesquification" of this kind, Buell explains, is the "consequence of mistaking form for substance" (359); Shakerism itself is not at fault in Reuben, and the Shakers, once they hear of his un-Shaker machinations, sever their connection with him. Still, Sedgewick's gothic portrayal of Shakerism shows her re-directing toward the Shakers some of what Buell calls the ambivalent attitude of many New England writers toward the "village and town life of their forebears," with its "degree of pious observance, moralism, and social stratification which the authors saw the more advanced minds of their own day as having at least partially broken" (360).

The gothic element had appeared again in 1829 in a one-page story, "The Shakeress," in the Pittsfield (Massachusetts) Berkshire Gymnasium's school paper, The Miscellany. Like the 1848 story of the same title, it was published anonymously; the author, probably a high school student, ¹⁶ is known only as "K". In this story, Annette and Gregory grow up with the Shakers, fall in love, and flee by night. They marry and have a year together before Gregory dies of a "lingering disease" (1) and Annette goes mad and drowns herself. There is no villainous elder here; in fact, the trustee who seeks out the couple and tries to persuade them to come back is kindly.

¹⁶ Holley Gene Duffield makes this assessment in his Annotated Bibliography.

Shakerism serves only as a plot device to bring the couple into proximity and then to block their love. Gregory fears that "some unfeeling Shaker" will see him declare himself to Annette, but he was left with the Shakers as a child by a parent also described as "unfeeling" (1). The entrapment in this story is more general; the Shakers are collectively acknowledged for their "sobriety, industry," "neatness," and "fair-dealing"; their land is "Romantic, fertile, and highly cultivated"; but still, when little Annette and her two small brothers are brought in, we are told that their "uncommon beauty" had caused "many a humane individual" to "drop a tear in secret, that beings so pure should be enthralled and educated in so superstitious a religion" (1).

Lamson's book also includes one Shaker love story which he claims is representative, and which adds to the context for considering the two 1848 fictions and Elkins's embedded narrative. It tells of Mary Williams and William Wright (not their real names) who, like Gregory and Annette, grew up with the Shakers and developed a fondness for each other which they declared only in looks. William left the community at sixteen, the "natural good sense and intelligence" of his mind having "so far mastered the flummeries, and superstitions, forced upon him by education" (193-94). However, he could not stop thinking of Mary and his Shaker home, and entreated the elders to take him back for a "second privilege" (194). They did, but "to his chagrin and disappointment" (194), they sent him to

the second family instead of to the church family, thus separating him even from the sight of Mary, as the "church family did not meet with the other families for worship," and "the young sisters were kept as close as the members of a convent" (194).

After only a few months, William left again, but came back a few days later, this time with a horse and carriage, and "boldly rode" up to the church house to fetch away his "natural sister who was a member of the family" (194), apparently having planned the maneuver in advance with her. Then, after a few more months, he began returning in secret to meet Mary, with another sister as her confidante, in one of the outbuildings. The elders heard of these meetings, however, and the two sisters were "hauled up before their confessors, and obliged to report the whole affair" (195). The next time William came for a tryst, he was met at the door by the second elder and the family deacon, "compelled" according to what Lamson has heard "to make his own confession," and then "politely escorted" to the outskirts of the village and given permission to depart. "And as he left them," Lamson reports, "he politely thanked them for their attentions" (195). Mary and the other sister, however, "notwithstanding their confessions and humiliations, were cruelly driven from their home, to find an asylum in the wicked world" (196). On the authority of his own observation, Lamson assures his readers that these

little love adventures are occurring, all over the Shaker kingdom, where there are young men and women, with those affections with which God has wisely endowed the race of mankind. The natures which God has given us are stronger than the chains of superstition and priestcraft. (196)

Daniel Pierce Thompson's "The Shaker Lovers," was first published in 1848 in The Shaker Lovers and Other Tales and reprinted in 1852 in May Martin and Other Tales of the Green Mountains, a fact which suggests that the potential for interesting readers in these little love adventures among the Shakers had not abated.¹⁷ It is a framed story, supposedly told by a "genial, hale looking farmer of about forty (258), to the frame narrator, who stops for shelter from a storm, though the farmer's narrative quickly becomes omniscient. The events are supposed to have happened twenty years earlier in the nearby Shaker community, identified as the one at Enfield, New Hampshire, by references to the "slumbering waters of the Mascomy" (260). The farmer tells the story of Seth Gilmore and Martha Hilson, raised by the Shakers (like the couples in the Lamson account and the school-paper fiction) who have both

¹⁷ The story was made into a one-act play which was performed in 1849 in Boston and other cities, and published in 1857. The production included songs and dances. Stein notes that the curiosity of the public now "focused on the problems created by celibacy and on the unique worship patterns of the Believers," rather than on the "founders or doctrines of the society"; he sees this "[a]bsorption into the world of popular culture" as "itself a further measure of accommodation with the world" and asserts that "Outsiders no longer feared the Believers," finding "[r]idicule a sufficient weapon against any remaining threat from the Society" (221; 485n216). I do not agree that this absorption or this ridiculing tactic means an end to fear of the Shakers, however.

begun to question some of the Shaker teachings, and who slowly realize they are falling in love. The ugly and hypocritical Elder Higgins forms designs both on Martha's person and on Seth's future inheritance from an uncle in the world, which he discovers by intercepting a letter.

Higgins suspects the feelings Seth and Martha are harboring and spies on them; he also, like Elder Reuben in Redwood, calls Martha to private confessions with him, much to the distress of both Martha and Seth. At last, in a moonlight tryst by a favorite tree, the lovers declare an attachment to each other, and Seth urges Martha to run away with him that very night, in a boat he has waiting. Martha, however, needs more time to consider such a move, and they agree that Seth will come back to their special tree in four weeks' time.

Higgins, watching but unable to hear them, confronts Seth after Martha leaves. Seth defies Higgins, and even vows to haunt him. Higgins pulls the boat rope, and Seth falls into the water and does not rise. Thinking Seth has drowned, Higgins suffers the tortures of his conscience and his fears of being found out.

When the community learns of Seth's disappearance, and the discovery of his hat and shoe prompt the rest of the community to believe him drowned, Martha must hide her particular grief. On the afternoon of the night he was to return, however, she thinks of going to the tree nonetheless, having heard that the "dead were permitted to keep the

appointments made by them with the living, and come in spirit to the place to meet and commune with their friends" (294).

As she ponders all this, a young man in "ill-fitting and whimsical clothes", with a "foolish, staring cast of countenance" (295), comes into the sisters' workroom on a tour of the village, where he says he has applied as a prospective member, and secretly hands Martha a note from Seth.

Meanwhile, Elder Higgins has resumed his unwelcome attentions to Martha and ordered her to meet him after evening meeting. However, at the close of the service, Seth is waiting at the sisters' door of the Meeting House with a horse and chaise. Martha runs into his arms and he sweeps her away, with the Shakers in hot pursuit on foot, urged on by Higgins, who has recovered from his shock at seeing what he thought was a ghost. Suddenly, the young man from the afternoon visit, now in his own clothes, pulls a rope across the road and stops them short. He pauses to do a comic turn on the fence as they are "prostrate, scrambling on all fours in the road," before riding off on his horse after Seth and Martha, straight to a justice of the peace.

When the frame narrative resumes, the farmer tells the traveller that he is Seth and his wife is Martha, and that their young helper who dressed as a dunce to pose as a prospective Shaker is now a successful lawyer; his reputation for deft management in their escape has advanced his career. Apparently Seth and Martha have been helped in the world by

their Shaker training: the narrator, before hearing the love story, has been "struck with the appearance of thrift and a good management in everything" about the farm and goes on to admire the "neatness and rustic taste of all within," and particularly with Martha's "peculiar quiet and order" in managing the household (258). The true fulfillment of Shaker gifts, it seems from this story, happens when Shaker practical skills and judicious management are transplanted to the world.

This story has a sudden disappearance, a heroine whose selfhood and virtue are in jeopardy from a powerful male authority figure, a confrontation between hero and villain, a rescue, and a sighting of a ghost that turns out to be a man who has not drowned after all. Its most gothic feature, however, is the "prying Higgins", whose "secret espionage" upon the young couple "would have conferred credit on a minion of the Inquisition" (269). His manner is "hateful," his countenance is "repulsive," and his character is composed of the "fanatic" and the "voluptuary" (269-270).¹⁸

Higgins has, the narrator tells us, gained an influence in the church "even greater, perhaps, than the elder brother himself," thanks to his "pretension to 'leading gifts' or direct revelations from above, and his intriguing and ambitious disposition" (270). However, his ambition not being satisfied with his spiritual domination, "he has

¹⁸ Another word, apparently an adjective, is illegible in the text.

aspired to, and by a similar means achieved, an equal ascendancy over the management of the business and temporal concerns of the establishment. Exacting the most rigid obedience from all, requiring the most implicit faith in all the ... doctrines of his creed, and ever untiring in searching out the delinquencies of others, while he shielded his own in the very convenient dogma handed down by Mother Ann Lee, for the special benefit of the peculiarly gifted, like himself, that 'to the pure all things are pure', he had become fairly an object of dread among his people.
(270)

This gothic villain in the person of a Shaker elder is overturned, literally, and made an object of ridicule. There is a similar comment in Seth's co-conspirator's deliberately making himself look "foolish" in order to pass himself off as a prospective Shaker (295). The farmer, who turns out to be Seth, tells the narrator that his purpose in telling the story is to show that "love and intrigue may sometimes be found under a broad brim" (260).

This of course can mean that earthly love, such as his and Martha's for each other, and villainous intrigue, such as the elder's, are equally present in the world and out of it, in the Shaker village. However, the only love represented in the story is the kind that leads back into the world. Love must leave the Shaker ground in order to be fulfilled. No other Shaker characters are delineated besides Seth, Martha, and the elder. Both Seth and Martha have begun to question some of the Shaker tenets, though Martha is not able to leave as decisively as Seth is. The elder is an opportunist who lacks Seth's abilities to rise in the world, and has found a

status in the Shaker village that he could not aspire to outside it. The story is set "some twenty years ago" which would place it in the late 1820s, a time, as previously noted, of declining energy in the church before the revival in Mother's Work; perhaps at a more vigorous time, he would not have been able to work his schemes so easily.

With the elder cast as a gothic villain, however -- ugly, sensual, self-seeking, exerting his evil power over a young woman -- and with no more benign or positive Shaker characters to provide balance, the portrayal of Shakerism is largely negative, and goes beyond simply showing that Shakers and world's people may be equally fallible. Seth's desire to "think for himself," we are told, goes against the leaders' teaching that "'ignorance is the mother of devotion'" (264). We are also told that it is the

settled policy of the leaders of this people, in order to make faithful and contented subjects, not only to instil into the minds of their youth the greatest possible abhorrence of the world, which is constantly represented as dishonest, licentious, and every way corrupt, but to guard with untiring vigilance every avenue of information that might have a tendency to undermine or diminish the prejudices and opinions thus inculcated. (265)

Rathbun, Brown, and Dyer had brought up these concerns, and Elkins too discusses the issue of controlling information from outside, though in a different tone and in terms that allow for greater complexity. His citation of rules includes the admonition that "No new literary work, or new-fangled article can be admitted" among the Shakers "unless, it first

be sanctioned by the ministry and elders" (28), He tells of an instance in which he purchased some books himself and the elder called him "underhanded and mean" (82) for doing so, even though he submitted them immediately for approval. This caused him to become "inappeaseable" in turn with the elder and to tell him to "save his breath, for it might, ere long, be more usefully employed" (82). Though the bishops were "more candid and reasonable" over this incident, the elder "was an unconscionable time in perusing" the books -- "an indirect means," Elkins felt, "of torturing me, for my audacity and arrogance" (82).

The Shaker Lovers" also claims that the elders assume special privileges for themselves, including food that is better than the "plain" and "substantial" fare served the brothers and sisters (272) -- a point contradicted by Elkins (29) -- and that "force, whatever may be said to the contrary, is, or at least was formerly, not infrequently resorted to for the purpose of restraining those detected in attempting to escape" (280). The Shaker mode of worship is confidently described as "meaningless," in terms that would be called racist today, with its "long-drawn nasal chant of Hottentot gibberish, set to the tune of, perhaps, Nancy Dawson, or the Roving Sailor, (for their tunes, as well as the words, they context, are inspired" (272).

The gothic elements in this tale, then, are put to the service of involving the reader in a story that celebrates

individual initiative (as long as the man is the initiator) and unites it with the courtship plot. We see this fusion most clearly in Seth's plea to Martha to believe that the "'feeling which the world calls love,'" when "'crowned by marriage, is allowed and approved by the good and wise of every sect but our own'" and also "sanctioned and blessed by the good book'" when "'read as a whole'" instead of only "'in such parts as our elders would have us take as our guide'" (277). All "'nature,'" he goes on, "'confirms'" this love and the Bible, "'when properly consulted, answers yea'" (278). He urges her to come with him "'into the world, where will be no mean spies to dog and torment us -- no tyrants to prevent our innocent actions, and make them an excuse for prosecuting their own foul designs" (278). In this world, "'united as one, never more to part,'" they will be "'free to live and in that love and freedom find our solace, our comfort, and lasting felicity'"; he exhorts her to "'fear not -- with my own hands I will support and provide for thee, and in my own heart I will cherish thee through all the changing scenes of life'" (278).

Marriage is thus equated -- by a male ex-Shaker, we note -- with freedom from domination over mind and body. This domination is of course imaged in Shaker garb, as a depraved celibate authority figured borrowed from gothic narrative. This version of gothic treatment reduces Shakerism to a force that is obstructive but not subversive -- an obstacle that can

be overturned, literally, by good American courage and ingenuity. Shakerism has been negated as a cultural force that might threaten the ideals of individual freedom and self-determination, here made synonymous with conventional values of sexual love and married felicity.

As Elder Higgins's unworthy ambition is contrasted to Seth's, the situation in this story could offer a writer an opportunity for a more complex study of individualism. "The Shaker Lovers," however, does not enter into this kind of dialogue: the elder's version of ambition is evil and hypocritical, while Seth's is good; the elder's evil and hypocritical version of ambition is fulfilled in the Shaker village, while Seth's good honest version requires him to leave it. The elder is actually a hypocrite, a perversion of the Shaker principles he is supposed to stand for; nevertheless, the story does not offer any other voice in support of those principles.

The love interest in the Moss Rose "Shakeress" story begins, as in Hentz's "The Shaker Girl," with a virtuous young man visiting a Shaker village and spying a lovely Shaker sister at worship. The man, Edward Worthington, manages to speak to the sister, Matilda Braithwaite; he finds her "not indifferent to him" (216) and asks permission to marry her from her earthly father, who is also "conspicuous" member of the Shaker community (216). The result is that she is locked away in a "dark chamber," visited only by an elder who labors

with her until she repents and declares she does not love Edward, before him and the elders. Not long afterwards, she gets a message that he has killed himself and been buried at the nearby crossroads. The other Shakers have not heard of his death, and do not surmise the cause of Matilda's pining as she hides her grief.

In this condition, she contrives to accompany an elder sister, known as Mother Jemima Richardson, on an errand that will take her by the crossroads, where she can visit Edward's grave. Managing to move on ahead of Jemima, she comes to the spot, grabs the stake that marks it, and pours out her feelings:

'I did love thee, murdered Edward! ... and heaven approved my love -- but I, wretch that I was, spurned the generous proffer of thy affection, and listened to the counsels of those who have destroyed thee!' (219)

From a nearby thicket, a human figure "bound in death-clothes" appears (219). The "reality" of Matilda's "misery" can admit of "no aggravation, even from a ghost or a corpse, so she waits and listens as it asks her for her "dearest wish". Her plea is that the spirit will tell Edward she loves him, and Edward himself then emerges from the "ghostly disguise" and "presses the repentant Matilda" to his heart.

A violent thunderstorm both echoes their passion and halts their declarations; he carries her to a humble cottage, interrupting the occupants' repast by spilling their hominy pot with the violence of their entry at the door. One of the

children calls them "A gentleman and a dead lady!" But Matilda revives, Edward takes her to his mother's house, and they are soon married. At the end, the narrator reports, "Edward related these facts to me with his own lips, and earnestly added: 'If you ever marry, my boy, by all means marry a Shakeress, if you can'" (223).

There is no lascivious elder in this story, but Matilda's father has renounced the unique paternal bond and joins in the collective smile of the community when Matilda renounces Edward. But the story does have a gloomy atmosphere, a ghostly sister, a fair heroine imprisoned in a dark room, a walking corpse that turns out to be alive, and a storm in the elements while human passions are raging. The action that involves the reader all takes place outside the Shaker community: on a road at dusk, at a crossroads, in a stormy wood, and at last in a humble cottage. All Matilda's conflicts over Edward and her Shaker past are relegated to a flashback. Thus the story is full of gothic trappings, all of which would serve in 1848 not only to thrill the susceptible Moss Rose reader but also, as in "The Shaker Lovers," to close Shakerism out of serious consideration as an authentic life.

The closing advisement to marry a Shakeress carries the implication that rescue and marriage are what a Shaker woman needs to make her (and a man) supremely happy. It also takes us back to the beginning of the story, where we are given a two-and-a-half-page treatise on the unnaturalness of Shaker

life and then invited to contrast the desiccated Jemima and the fresh young Matilda as we meet them on their uphill road together. Commenting on the public worship, the narrator notes that even those visitors who "disputed" the Shakers' "peculiar tenets" were "forced to confess that the solemnity of their earthly shakings was calculated to impress the mind with awe and reverence toward that Being whom they worshipped in so singular a manner." (209). The narrator goes on to say that

[p]erhaps the interest the world took in this novel sect was considerably heightened by the reflection that they had voluntarily deprived themselves of those common enjoyments, without which, life would be insupportable to the mass of mankind. (209)

Seeing the Shakers as "all engaged in a crusade against nature, united in a desperate resolve to brave her most universal command"(209), ¹⁹ this narrator too -- like the author of the Berkshire Gymnasium's story of the same title -- feels compassion for the "young hearts which are trained up in the principles of Shakerism, and early imbued with a firm prejudice against the general customs of society" (210-11). When the narrator's reflections cease and the story opens, we are meant to feel compassion for Matilda, especially when we hear Jemima telling her, "'The evil one hath beguiled thee, ..

¹⁹ This interest would have been enhanced still more by the 1840s, when, as Reynolds points out, the overwhelming power of the sex drive had received an endorsement held by many as scientific when phrenologist Andrew Combe claimed to have located the "organ of Amativeness" as the largest part of the brain. (Reynolds 214).

thou didst verily love. How wilt thou atone for this great sin?"(213) and "'Thou must mortify the flesh .. thou must put off the old man and all his deeds'"(214).

In the opening pages, the narrator also rejects the idea that the "wild and thrilling emotions" of "bright hope" for a "happy immortality" can truly make suffering less real and painful, especially the suffering visited on the young who have "not yet learned to curb the spontaneous emotions of their souls, in whom the unsophisticated law of nature is the law of God'"(211) -- that law leading, of course, to "all the advantages of connubial blessedness and the delights of domestic felicity" (210). The closing advice to marry a Shakeress thus also looks back to this insistent naturalization of the conventional home -- the agenda to which both Shakerism and the gothic have been deployed in this tale. Just as the Shaker upbringing of Seth and Martha in "The Shaker Lovers" has taught them the skills of farming and household management, Matilda's Shaker upbringing has kept her affections, and her sexual nature, under guard until a worthy man comes along to rescue her.

Neither "The Shaker Lovers" nor "The Shakeress" exploits the subversive potential either of Shakerism or of the gothic genre; in both stories, Shakerism and gothicism give way to the traditional marriage narrative. Shakerism offers a way of describing local manners and serves the plot as a block to young love, but it is a block that American ingenuity and

courage can overcome.

Elkins's book, as we see from the above texts, thus appeared at a time when the strategies of gothic narrative were operating in the prevalent images of Shakerism. His use, however, of the same elements -- the young lovers, the elder figures, the inner and outer atmosphere, the sudden departure -- brings a new Shaker plot to bear upon our assumptions about love, power, and narrative forms. Elkins confronts the subversive potential both of romantic love within a Shaker setting and of Shakerism on worldly notions of romantic love. In what Reynolds might call a bold absorption of paradoxes (202), Elkins fuses "warring viewpoints" in a way that creates "greater density and suggestiveness" (208).

Thus, though Elkins's book advertises itself as a work of fact, it operates in many ways as a work of fiction. Holley Gene Duffield has pointed out Elkins's creative use of omniscient narration (3), dialogue (3), and time shifts (4) in the Urbino-Ellina love story.²⁰ I further propose that the book itself acts as a novel, in what Reynolds would consider its openness to subversive social forces, both within Shakerism and outside it; in its humanizing artistic imagination; and in its dialogic interplay of inserted genres.

²⁰ Professor Duffield's "Hervey Elkins's Shaker Short Story" was published in The Shaker Messenger, winter 1993; these page numbers are from the manuscript version he shared with me.

These genres include the King James Bible, Shaker theological texts and spiritual narratives, mathematical and scientific writing, historical accounts, personal letters, repetitions of lists of rules learned long ago by heart, and even, as we will see in this chapter, the gothic tale.

Elkins announces his book itself as his answer to an unnamed correspondent's request that he "depict the manners, laws, and characteristics which designate, bind and retain in sacred compact a people naturally diverse," "trace" the life's pilgrimage of the Shaker youth," "aver the motives which led [him] to grope so long, in conformity to their regime and secession", and thus "cast, with precision, a retrospect upon that alternately felicitous and troubled period" of his own life, "passed away from the turmoil of the world, in the quiet cloisters of a religious retreat, in company with three hundred, including old and young, male and female, votaries of Shaker dogmata" (2).

Elkins was fourteen when he went to the Shakers at Enfield, New Hampshire, with his parents and brother. He stayed with his parents in the Novitiate Order for four months and then moved to the Senior Order, where he was first apprenticed in the tailoring shop. Over the next fifteen years, he was schooled in Shaker doctrine and trained in a variety of occupational skills. He studied and later taught in the boys' school, and he served as boys' caretaker. He left the community at the age of twenty-nine, after much soul-

searching. One of his main reasons for leaving was his increasing interest in fields of study not approved as useful by the society, including the metaphysical sciences, modern and ancient languages, and history beyond lists of names and dates. Other reasons included the society's discouragement of special or exclusive friendships and the previous departures of "some of the most intelligent and most amiable of the members" (102). Though his father had left the community long before, his mother and brother were still there at the time he was writing the book.

Besides his exposition of Shaker history, community organization, routines and regulations, and "statutes and ordinances" (32), Elkins gives vivid descriptions of the landscape and the seasons and lively accounts of his boyhood activities -- rowing on the lake, sugaring, milling logs, berrying, "the clean and healthy vocation of haying" (41). In the Senior Order he missed the "sweet company" of his maternal parent, now that his new family was made up of about twenty other boys and two male caretakers, one spiritual, one temporal, but he observes that his mother knew he was "happy and well" (42).

He also describes the worship service and the dance from his experience as a participant, and tells of receiving his first spiritual gift, a "Cup of Solemnity" from which he "drank" and "felt for a season the salutary effects" (54). He records his conversion experience, when he seemed surrounded

by a "halo of heavenly glory" and he "drank deep of the cup of the waters of life, and was lifted in mind and purpose from this world of sorrow and sin" (54).

He recounts how, as he began to partake of more studies - - such as he could undertake with the limited books permitted him --he found that the "aliment afforded by study" caused his "religious enthusiasm to wax cold" (84). Nevertheless, he "venerated that influence which the Shakers term the Holy Ghost" and by which he could "rapidly revolve two or three hours without feeling any other result than refreshment to soul and body" (84).

Sometimes his use of landscape and atmosphere harks back to the gothic, as in his long opening description of the Society's physical setting (11-13), followed by his more minute description of the various spaces -- vestibules, corridors, dormitories, closets, stables, even the piggery -- which have been inhabited by his presence. In an argument among the brothers as they are digging potatoes, has the atmosphere enact the mental state of an angry brother called Zealous: "the wind rises as Zealous effervesces, hisses, and boils over in passion. The boys laugh, the tempest howls, and the agitated lake throws up white crests, rendering it a motley sea of ebony and pearl" (47). In a different mood, there is emotion as well as beauty in his description of Mascoma Lake in winter:

When the surface was not covered with snow, but stretched for miles in exact conformation to the

earth's sphericity -- smooth, transparent, sonorous, and dazzling, no scenery of winter is more poetical or sublime. (51)

And his portrait of himself as he contemplated his departure is a haunting evocation of melancholy:

For awhile, this sighing from an unknown cause, when all around me continued to prosper and appear beautiful; this longing for undefinable resources of pleasure; this ennui, prostration of spirit and despair; this inexpressible malady of the mind; this wandering in nubibus; these vague aspirations, and these tears led me to doubt that I should ever again be happy; and to conjecture that all happiness lay in anticipation, and that all charms and glories cease when we reach the spot whence they emanate. I sought to again find that happiness which I had once experienced in devotion and found it not. (101)

This self-portrait closes Book II of Elkins's account and leads us to the love story. He is telling us the story, he says, because he "can no better illustrate the joys, sorrows, pleasures and conflicts of love, as exhibited in that asylum of those who have rejected it, than to recount a circumstance of real occurrence" (104).

Elkins informs us that Urbino, whom we first met in the potato-digging scene with Zealous, has "since left the society," and has allowed Elkins "all freedom" to rename him and tell his story (104). Urbino is twenty-five, and Elkins the narrator is in his confidence, so we may assume they are about the same age. Urbino, like Elkins at this point, is "sighing for an inexpressible something which is not there to be found" (104), until one day he sees a sister named Ellina as he has never seen her before. He falls in love with her

now, the narrator tells us, because his mind is "vacant, in search of an object on which to place his affection" (106). His love, says the narrator, is "not a depraved and sensual appetite, but the natural desire of one mind to commingle with that of another, like the tendency of two atmospheres, of equal density, to blend into one" (106).

Urbino finds occasions to pass Ellina a "word, a look, or a gesture significant of attachment," and before a year has passed, Ellina's admiration for Urbino becomes known to a third brother, Albert, also in Urbino's confidence. Urbino "would have shuddered at the idea of any union except that of brother and sister in the gospel" (107). However, the eldress finds him with her and another sister. He is reading them a copy of a letter he has written for one of the elders, and "one or two more specimens of composition" (109), but they have locked the door "to keep the little girls from disturbing them" (109). The eldress does not make a scene when admitted to the room, but Urbino is called before the ministry and elders the next day for an investigation of his "partial union" -- union denoting feelings of partiality -- with Ellina (111). The bishop warns him "with energy mingled with affection" that "concentrative love! earthly and local!" will pull him "down, down, DOWN to hell," because it leads away from the universal love of God and Christ (111). Urbino manages by some deft language to equate his love for Ellina with the attachment of Christ for his disciple John, but the

bishop warns him to beware, perhaps of his own rationalizing as well as his partiality.

It is after these events that the story demonstrates the narrator's claim which sets this tale apart from other love stories and makes it counter-traditional testimony: "Love, entertained on Shaker ground, costs much more than its intrinsic value" (112). Now, we learn, "enmity and jealousy" are "wrought to such a high pitch" among the sisters that "there is no peace for Ellina" (112):

Mistaken women, substituting their rancor for religious aversion to evil; envious women, belching fury upon the recipient of an attention which they coveted; hypocritical women, pretendingly hating that tie which they once strove to fasten. (112-13)

Not all the sisters participate in this "reproaching" of Ellina with "sinister absurdity in word and gesture" for her "Carnal love"; however, the elders point out the situation to Urbino, and tell him they are powerless to stop it. Elkins as narrator then asks but does not answer the touching question, "But did they try?"

Even under these stressful conditions, the couple's "exquisite love and exquisite inquietude" continue for two years. They sit at opposite windows, he reading and she sewing; he prunes an apple tree that obstructs their view of each other; a "side wise inclination of the head" becomes and "occult counter-sign" between them" (116). An "espionage" observing them can find nothing untoward in their looks and gestures, but when the whole village must mobilize to put out

a fire in one of the buildings, he is overheard casually saying "something eulogistic" about her hair, and a "third party takes back an exaggerated report" (117).

As a result, Ellina is awakened before dawn and taken away to another community, "where, from that time, [she] rapidly waned in health, until a pulmonary disease, induced by the agonies of a broken heart, released her troubled spirit from the earth" (119). Without her, Urbino takes no pleasure in his surroundings:

The house, the lake, the fields, the mountains, -- all received their charms from her. This vale, which to him was once the most fascinating spot on earth, had now become the most horrible. Whatever throws a gloom over the soul, enshrouds and darkens, to the view of that soul, every surrounding object. (122)

Eventually, as we already know before the story begins, he leaves the society, but, we are told, he "often returns to view the beautiful mansion where once dwelt the object of his love," and to "see again the window which once disclosed her delicate form to his eye" (123).

The heroine who is banished suddenly and then dies without her love, and the hero who gives himself over to grief and haunts familiar places, the chorus of grim sisters -- all are figures from a gothic novel, as is the projection of the characters' mood upon setting and atmosphere. Urbino first looks with love at Ellina on a summer morning, when nature, he tells the narrator, is "'bedecked with gems'", the air "'perfumed with floras'," and the "'vapors along the mountainsides fast dissolving in the sun'" (105). Ellina is

taken away on a "chilly, dark, and gloomy" night (118), amid dense vapors that "prevent the vision's extending but a few feet" (117). We follow her as she is "led, slowly down, clinging to the spiral rails, those stairs she would never more ascend" passing "by the door of that sanctuary, into which she would never more enter," and thinking "of that assembly, so often there gathered, none of whom she would ever again behold on earth" (118). She "gasps" -- the narrative moves into present tense -- "smiles and swoons at the thought of separating from of that number, ONE!!"

The omniscient narrator, as Holley Duffield has noted, recounts scenes where Elkins himself could not have been present, and the dialogue is more narrative reshaping than remembered speech. Elkins has recast this story, which he offers to us as true, as a gothic romance, using but reinvesting some of the same gothicizing strategies of character and atmosphere as the fiction writers in this chapter. As in traditional gothic fiction, atmosphere reflects emotion. In this story, however, both the heroine and the hero are behind walls, but they are walls which the couple has chosen. Both have signed the Shaker covenant, and they do not wish to leave. The heroine is taken away suddenly and secretly, in an assertion of power, but not with an intent to exploit her sexually; she is "treated well," and the ministry, we are told, "no doubt, tried to console her"; the "people of the Society to which she was transferred, also, treated her

with kindness, but a malady of the mind will engender a malady of the soul" (124).

Another important distinction, however, between Elkins's book and the gothicized fictions we have seen, is that Elkins's Shaker training has attuned him to a spirit world that does not need to be accounted for in everyday terms. Though he admits that "much chaff was blended with the precious seed" in accounts of spirit activity, he acknowledges the idea

taught by the Shakers from the beginning of their sect, and corroborated by the relations of Andrew J. Davis and other psychologists, that, all of us are more or less inspired by spirits congenial with ourselves, or but little higher, ... [and that] those, whose hearts are pure, may, and do, receive communications of intrinsic worth to themselves, to stimulate and encourage them in to faithfulness in self-denial, or a daily cross, and of indisputable evidence to others. (35-36)

He recounts his own receiving of spirit gifts; he accepts the "late manifestations from the spirit land" as evidence of a "future state of existence", as "the Shakers have ever maintained on this subject" (34). Ellina is described as sometimes "employed as an instrument to speak for holy spirits," and performs this task with a "clear and sonorous voice" and "purely sentimental language" that carry "conviction to every heart" (107). The role of spirits in everyday human experience is thus rewritten; visitors from beyond death do not frighten people and then turn out to be humans; they are part of a rich texture of ongoing experience.

Still, it is the nature of the love and union between Urbino and Ellina that most profoundly subverts both the gothic romance, with its disruptive passions, and the marriage narrative, with its investment in valorizing the world's "partial love" -- which Elkins, in his epilogue, calls "monogamic pleasure" (133). Urbino, the narrator tells us in bringing the story to its end, "only wished to associate with her, in the modesty and affection of a brother"; the "sentiment of love" between them was "so pure, it would never have broken down the walls of an unflinching devotion to the general restrictions of the church" (124). Urbino and Ellina may not have understood their own motives in their exchanges of looks and nods, and their commitments to this alternative form of union may not have always have been mutual. Yet, at the same time, they are forging a counter-marriage in accordance with their faith. The possibility of such a union may be one of the truths that may still be made "manifest to all" according to the Shaker doctrine of continuing revelation, which had been set down in the Shakers' own first published tract in 1790 (qtd. in Morse 62).²¹

The irony of this love, then, is that it is obstructed by the marriage narrative in a setting that excludes marriage. The embittered sisters are still invested in the marriage

²¹ The document is the unsigned Concise Statement of the Principles of the Only True Church . . . (1790). Authorship has been attributed to Joseph Meacham and to James Whittaker (Stein 46-47, 68, 452n9, and 453n21).

narrative, and this makes them resent and torment Ellina; the leaders, though they promote living in celibate union, cannot stretch their sense of it far enough to acknowledge and accommodate this conflation of partial and collective feeling in their midst. They still interpret the relationship of Urbino and Ellina in terms of a worldly narrative instead of their own.

Elkins as narrator speculates that if there had been a "true philosopher" in the ministry's position, he would have been able to comprehend the situation and "would have treated the affair very differently." He would have kept the congregation, and especially the "rancorous" sisters, from making any reference to the relationship, and would have "treated both" Urbino and Ellina -- and "caused others to do the same" -- with a

tenderness and respect which would have awaked in them, a universal love and attachment to all. For the more they were shunned and held up as objects of apostasy, the more, of course, would they cleave together and detest others. (123)

Had the Shaker brother and sister met with this kind of support, he goes on, nothing could have arisen to prevent their peaceable continuation as members of the institution. For above all, they adored the divinity which had been taught them" (123).

Calling their "peaceable continuation" in celibate proximity a counter-traditional testimony to the customary marriage plots is not to say that such a life of "exquisite

love and exquisite disquietude" (116) would always, or ever, have been easy for them. It is to say, however, that the possibility deserves a respectful hearing, which the Shakers in that time and place appear to have been unable to give. The leaders, however, see Urbino and Ellina clinging to "two antagonistic principles" -- partial and universal love -- and they are "determined, in their administrative handling of the situation, to "bring the work to a quick result" (125). They are, Elkins tells us, like "all zealous men" in this relentless pursuit of closure. The "surely progressive and universal redemption of man, under the guidance of an Infinite Intelligence and Unlimited Power, is, for them, too slow a process" (125), even though, like the principle of continuing revelation, it is one of their own narratives.

It is difficult to imagine a worldly love story saying that love, entertained on any ground, costs more than its intrinsic worth. The high cost these lovers pay, however, is not exacted because of Shaker principles in conflict with love, but because of worldly failures in compassion and judgment, on Shaker ground. The elders who cannot rise to the demands of this occasion are not conniving or lascivious, like Elder Harrington or Elder Higgins. Their betrayal of the trust invested in their authority does not come about through greed or lust, but through another, more poignant kind of failure to live up to their own principles. Like the jealous sisters, the beleaguered leaders cannot move beyond their

investment in worldly narratives, in order to comprehend the new plot that their own Shaker principles have generated.

The fiction writers in this chapter have set out Shakerism in gothic trappings to reduce complexity and to endorse the traditional marriage narrative. Elkins brings the gothic plot and atmosphere into his reconstructed narration of facts as another competing voice, along with the historical accounts, lists of rules, conversion narratives, acknowledgments of spirit presences, dialogues, letters detailing his religious outlook, descriptions of dance and ritual. Each voice enhances the complexity of his narrative. In so doing, he makes the Urbino-Ellina narrative, and the book in which it appears, a literary text, and in dialogic terms, a counter-traditional, subversive, and deeply humanizing Shaker novel.

CHAPTER III

ANGELIC SPACE AND THE "IMPULSE OF THE AGE":

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS AND SHAKER STORIES

OF HOME AND MOTHER

"The impulse of the age," observes William Dean Howells in the Atlantic Monthly for June 1876, "is toward a scientific, a sensuous, an aesthetic way of life" (707). Because of this impulse, he continues,

men no longer remain on lonely farms, or in the little towns where they were born, brooding upon the ways of God to man; if they think of God, it is too often to despair of knowing him; while the age calls upon them to learn this, that, and the other, to buy pianos and pictures, and take books out of the circulating library. (707)

Howells's article "A Shaker Village," in which these observations appear, grew out of his six-week vacation the previous summer near the Shaker community at Shirley, Massachusetts, with his wife Elinor Mead Howells and three children, Winnifred (age twelve), John (age seven) and Mildred (age two).¹ In this article, while there may indeed be an

¹ Howells was thirty-nine, and he and Elinor had been married for thirteen years. On 4 September 1875, he wrote to Charles Dudley Warner that the Shakers "present great temptations to the fictionist, and as Mrs. Howells has charged me not to think of writing a story with them in it, I don't see how I can help it" (qtd. in Vanderbilt 12). Elinor, however, contributed the title for The Undiscovered Country and praised it as the "best yet" of Howells's novels (Merrill

element of what Firkins calls "sympathy on its best behavior" (51), Howells scrupulously represents the Shakers as "a sect simple, sincere, and fervently persuaded of the truth of their doctrine, striving for the realization of a heavenly ideal on earth" (699). He traces the marked decline in Shaker numbers over the preceding decades to his own age's impulse toward continually acquiring material things and personal gratification. This impulse, he maintains, has supplanted the earlier "zeal for heaven, for the imagined service of God" which "built up the Shaker communities" (707).

There is another impulse of Howells's age, however, not noted in this article but strongly operant in his life and in much of his work. This other impulse is a complex nostalgia for constructs of "home" and "mother." Howells biographer Rodney Olsen observes that in the "antebellum middle-class culture" of Howells's youth (he was born in 1837), the "ideology of autonomous individualism" often brought the compelling image of the self-made man into conflict with the similarly compelling "sentimental portrayal of home, concentrating on the image of the comforting, all-forgiving mother" (Dancing in Chains 100-01). ²John Crowley notes that

and Arms 183). We may gain a sense of their marriage from Howells's letter to a friend when Elinor died in 1910: "She was a great intelligence, a clearer critical mind than I have ever known, and she devoted herself to my wretched ambition as wholly as if it had been a religion" (Merrill and Arms 306).

² On the "idealization of home and mother," Olsen cites Welter; Cott 63-100; Ryan, Empire of Mother; McDannell; and others (Olsen 303n6). On autonomy and individualism, his

literary aspirations and concerns of home and mother were brought together in Howells's early childhood as he listened to his mother reading or reciting poetry (Black Heart's Truth 4); he was later to say in his 1916 memoir, Years of My Youth, that she was not simply "the centre of home" but "home itself" (20, qtd. in Olsen 25). In this memoir, he would write that the "youth is always striving away from his home" and the "things" of home, but that "whatever pain he suffers," he must "deny them" and "cleave to the world and its "things"; this is his "fate," the "condition of all achievement and advancement for him" (110, cited in Olsen 101).³

These constructs of home and mother survived in the "cult of the hearth," which, as Elizabeth Stevens Prioleau points out, was still "a common sublimation of the seventies" (43), though facing new challenges.⁴ Alan Trachtenberg explains that

citations include Irvin G. Wylie 16-20 and Cawelti 39-75.

³ His sister Aurelia reminisced in later life that "though a home boy", Howells was "not cowardly," and that "at a suitable time of life he went out and took his place in the world, and kept it" (qtd. in Olsen 137). By 1875 he had been "in the world" for seventeen years. His achievements in pursuit of his "wretched ambition" had included editing a newspaper in Columbus; writing an authorized campaign biography of Abraham Lincoln; selling his poems and stories to magazines; serving as American consul in Venice from 1861 to 1865; and publishing a collection of poems (1873), two books on Italian travel (1866 and 1867), and two novels. He had been with the Atlantic since 1866, first as assistant editor and then as editor.

⁴ See Ryan, Womanhood in America 193-249; Cott 63-100; Douglas; Hayden, The Grand Domestic Revolution (1981); Sklar 155-163; Gilman Women and Economics (1898); Gail Parker (ed.); and Hartman and Banner (eds.), especially Linda Gordon (54-71)

the "cultivated home" was the "domestic image of America" of the time, representing an "island of virtue and stability" (149).⁵ Such an island would be especially appealing in the midst of what Howells calls the "modern ferment" ("Shaker Village" 707) of industrialization and rampant capitalism with all their attendant uncertainties -- economic recession, widespread unemployment, displaced populations, rural decay.⁶ Trachtenberg observes that the stabilizing image of the cultivated home, tastefully appointed and lovingly managed by the virtuous mother, was "repeated in the press and in sermons throughout the period", and goes on to note that in this "official" construct, self and identity were heavily invested in ownership of home and property. He quotes Henry Ward Beecher's 1876 Fourth-of-July proclamation that the "laborer ought to be ashamed of himself" who "in 20 years does not own the ground on which he stands ... who has not provided carpets for the rooms, who has not his China plates, who has not his chromos, who has not some books nestling on the shelf" (qtd.in

and Daniel Scott Smith (119-136).

⁵ Prioleau notes Howells's ambivalent use of this characterization of home in his novel Private Theatricals, serialized in the Atlantic in 1875 and published in book form as Mrs. Farrell after his death (Circle of Eros 36-51).

⁶ See also H. Wayne Morgan, especially Morgan 149-70; Falk 223-38; and Roberts 275-88.

For a discussion of these concerns in relation to The Undiscovered Country, see Vanderbilt 11-48.

Trachtenberg 149). ⁷

A quarter-century earlier, Andrew Jackson Downing's book The Architecture of Country Houses had asserted that a "fitting, tasteful, and significant dwelling" was "a powerful means of civilization", having "a great social value for a people" and "a moral influence", and had called America "this country where every man may have a home" (xx). It was, Downing maintained, a moral and social duty to make the family home "all it should be," and to strengthen the "attachment" to home by "every external sign of beauty that awakens love in the young" (xx).

In addition, Michael Gordon and M. Charles Bernstein note in their study of nineteenth-century marriage manuals that home ownership was often considered conducive to successful

⁷ Trachtenberg also cites James Parton, "perhaps the most popular biographer and essayist of the decade," who praised chromolithography for its capacity to reproduce images quickly, thus making works of art -- "tangible signs of culture in the form of consumable objects" -- available to those seeking admission to the category of "'thinking, knowing, skillful, tasteful Americans'" (150). Scientific developments in printing and image-reproduction were having far-reaching effects; photographs could eventually be reproduced on different surfaces, including postcards, buttons, jewelry, and even watch cases, as the Shaker sister Althea Brown learns from the giddy bride Mrs. Cargate in Howells's 1896 novella, The Day of Their Wedding, discussed in the next chapter. The custom of photographs on cartes de visite enabled ladies calling on each other to distribute their own images, and to gather those they received into albums. This meant that it was now possible to gratify the impulse of the age by promoting and recreating one's own image according to the latest scientific advances, and by acquiring and collecting one's friends as works of art. It also meant, however, that one could become collectible oneself, a concern to be discussed later in the chapter in connection with Scudder's "A House of Entertainment."

marriage, and that one prescribed way for a benignly patriarchal husband to demonstrate his affection was to bring home knickknacks for his wife.⁸ They also point out, citing Welter, that the "notion of woman as guardian and preserver of morality is clearly tied to the idealization of femininity frequently encountered in nineteenth-century marriage literature" (670). Thus for many in the middle class, and for those who aspired to it, the ideal of the cultivated home and guardian-angel wife/mother continued through the nineteenth century to represent the locus of fulfillment for all material, sexual, and spiritual desire.

Howells's article "A Shaker Village", provides a context for examining two fictions that use Shakers, and that feature this collective yearning for the cultivated home sanctified by the presence of the angelic mother. This yearning, as we have seen, was still evident in the 1870s, a time of uprooting and change as people moved from east to west, country to city, and city to suburb.⁹ The two fictions are Mrs. E.B. Raffensperger's "Shaker John" (1872) and Horace Elisha Scudder's "A House of Entertainment" (1878). The article also provides a perspective for considering Howells's own first novel on a Shaker theme, The Undiscovered Country (1880). All

⁸ See also Charles E. Rosenberg and Herman.

⁹ An economic recession in the centennial year of 1876 brought still more disruption and unemployment. Howells would set The Vacation of the Kelwyns in 1876, which, like The Undiscovered Country, features depopulated rural areas, farms standing idle, and tramps on the road.

these fictions appeared in the Atlantic during Howells's ten-year sojourn as editor-in-chief (1871-1881), The Undiscovered Country being serialized and then issued in book form. All three, as we will see, appropriate Shakerism to comment on the uncertainties of their times and the consequent longing for home and mother. In doing so, all three bring Shakerism into contact with earthly narratives of marriage which are invested to varying degrees in the ideal of the cultivated home.

All three authors' appropriations of Shakerism, however, depend on cultivating a sense of Shaker life as "other" than, or different from, the lives of their readers, in order to appeal to readers still at least nominally invested in the ideal of home-and-motherhood as woman's validation -- especially when, as Mary Ryan points out, it was "quite obvious" in the later nineteenth century that "many American women had neither the pretense nor the possibility of conforming to the middle class model of womanhood" (Womanhood in America 195). It would also have seemed quite obvious, at least at first glance, that Shaker otherness or difference would lend itself well to the task of shoring up an ideal of earthly domesticity that was continually threatened by the modern ferment and was meeting new resistance from the changing aspirations of many women as well. After all, Shakers were already familiar to the public, and regular readers of the Atlantic might even remember Elder Frederick Evans's "Autobiography of a Shaker" which had appeared in two

installments in 1869 ¹⁰. And, as Herma Cate points out, Shakers "were obviously fit subject matter for the local colorists of the period" (22), with their distinctive beliefs, practices, dress, speech, and regional associations ¹¹.

Cate attributes the local-color interest in Shakers to their "waning" numbers and to their acceptance by the "general public" as "an industrious but strange group" (22). The strangeness, however, is particularly significant to the kind of appropriation these three authors -- Raffensperger, Scudder, and Howells at this stage in his career -- employ upon the Shakers. All three of these stories rely on Shaker

¹⁰ Howells cites Evans autobiography, which ran in two installments in the Atlantic in April and May, 1869. After the Shakers had held a convention in Boston in 1868, Evans had been invited by the then-editor "Friend [James] Fields" to "clarify the meaning of the sect which has lately been brought into notoriety" by outside writers including William Hepworth Dixon, cited in the Introduction to this study. In keeping with the Shaker doctrine of continuous revelation, Evans states in the "Autobiography" that he is "satisfied with the continued realizations of the prophetic spirits within" (415-16). Essential to Evans's acceptance of Shakerism, as he recounts, was the "Dual God, a Father, the fountain of wisdom and power, and a Mother, the fountain of Goodness and love to humanity" (423). Therefore, his embrace of Shakerism is recounted as a coming-home to a Family in Christ headed by two spiritual parents, combined in one Father-Mother-God and realized on earth through the animating presences of "the man Jesus" and "the woman Ann" and, in turn, through the consecrated leadership of the Shaker Ministry of both sexes (423).

¹¹ Clara Marbug Kirk and Rudolf Kirk comment on Howells's editorial commitment to local color in the Atlantic. See also Nettels, especially 126-131 on The Undiscovered Country. For discussions of local color see two works of Van Wyck Brooks, both treating Howells: New England Indian Summer 1865-1915 and Howells: His Life and World, especially 91-101 and 102-112.

For an exploration of the interpretive implications of local color, see Donovan.

otherness to provide the difference or contrast that ultimately sustains the worldly -- and endangered -- cult of the hearth. What could be farther apart, they ask, than communal dwelling and private home, celibacy and marriage, shared child-rearing and private mothering? What could be more appropriate, then, than showing the negative example of Shakerism to demonstrate yet again that the one-family home with the one angel-mother is only true heaven on earth?

It would thus have been inconvenient at best for these writers to recognize in their Shaker stories the extent to which this ideal had already been challenged in the world. As early as 1855, reformer Stephen Pearl Andrews had issued a pamphlet calling for improved child-care through community facilities and prophesying the "grand domestic revolution" (Hayden, Grand Domestic Revolution 102). Even the Atlantic had participated in the challenge; in 1868 and 1869 it had carried a series of five articles by Melusina Fay Peirce on cooperative housekeeping which promoted women's associations to share housework, and advocated payment by husbands for cooking, laundry, and sewing as skilled labor (Hayden, Grand ... 68). Charlotte Perkins Gilman was later to carry these ideas still further in Women and Economics (1898) and in her stories for the Forerunner (1909-1916). Howells, who was to know Gilman and support her efforts, would enter the debate on domestic reform in The Vacation of the Kelwyns (written in 1909-1910 and published posthumously in 1920), through a male

character, Elihu Emerance, who promotes nutritional reforms, has plans to found a cooking school, and shows the farm-wife Mrs. Kite a more efficient way to make biscuits.

The three authors in this chapter, however, seem to avoid addressing this impulse, and the issues it could raise. They do this by insistently and nostalgically re-positing a binary opposition between the angel-in-the-house model and the Shaker version of angelic space, in which housekeeping tasks were indeed performed more efficiently through cooperation. Without this binary opposition, this re-statement of otherness, a common ground might actually appear between Shaker life and worldly life, and this would interfere with the writers' use of Shakerism, for contrast, to re-establish the worldly (and cultivated) angel/mother in her worldly (and cultivated)/angelic space.

All three of these authors, then, seem to have thought that they could appropriate Shakerism selectively, in order to use it in two ways within the same story. On the one hand, they tried to use Shaker tranquillity and orderliness for positive contrast, to show that they saw what disarray the materialist impulse had wrought upon their age. On the other hand, they tried to use Shakerism for negative contrast, as a warning of how sterile life might be if the old and tried conventions of home, mother, and angelic space should lose their authority in these troubled times. 'If only we could go home to Mother,' they seem to say, adding hastily, 'but not

the way the Shakers do.' They may have thought that subsuming Shakerism into the marriage narrative would reconcile these positive and negative appropriations. However, they do not appear to have foreseen the ambivalence, and the tensions, that these competing agendas would create in their stories.

In Howells's article, his commitment to fairness in reporting on the Shakers may mask some of this ambivalence. He cites the Shakers' concern that "alien writers" have represented them chiefly as providers of "homes for helpless and destitute people of all ages and sexes" (700). Instead of contradicting this impression, however, he recalls the "plain, quaint village of Shirley" with its "long, straight street," its "severely simple edifices," its gardens and "fragrant orchards" and "clovery meadow-land," and its "exceeding peace," and finds himself agreeing that a person "broken in hope, health, or fortune could do no better than come hither and meekly ask to be taken into that quiet fold" (700). However, he goes on, "such is the hardness of the natural heart -- I cannot think of one's being a Shaker on any other terms, except, of course, a sincere conviction" (700).

This homage to "sincere conviction" has the quality of an afterthought, though the Shakers reproduced this and other passages from the article in the July 1876 issue of their own periodical, then called The Shaker. Editor G. A. Lomas noted that Howells "appears honest, 'almost persuaded,' and worthy of thanks from us and all interested" (53). The

"'almost persuaded'" characterization invites different readings. The Shaker editor may be saying, as a compliment, that Howells is almost one of them, nearly persuaded of the truth of their doctrine. The remark could also indicate, gently, that Howells may be "'almost persuaded'" that he himself is giving the Shakers the fairest possible presentation. Howells does seem to take this obligation seriously. He is committed to telling his readers that the Shakers' faith, sincerity, charity, and labor entitle them to more than the "superficial renown among men" that their garden seeds, brooms, quaint dress, and religious dances have brought them (699). He disposes of the popular impression that the "young people of the Shakers" are kept in "compulsory allegiance," asserting that they are "entirely free to go or stay" as "soon as they are old enough to take care of themselves" (705). He assures his readers that the "suggestion of bareness" in Shaker dwellings is "not inconsistent, however, with comfort" (709). And, as we have seen, he identifies the acquisitive "impulse of the age" as a more significant factor than celibacy in the Shaker decline (707).

In this last regard, the Shaker also reprinted a comment from the editor of the Albany Evening Express, who called Howells's article hurtful to the Shakers in its allusion to this "'decay of numbers, which the Shakers confess with so great regret'" (qtd. in Lomas 52). Lomas admits that the point is "well-taken" and deeply regrettable. He goes on,

however, to point out that

[i]f Shakerism is dependent upon a steady increase in numbers, it was a decided failure many years ago. But its principles are just as correct today, with its 2500 adherents, as when 4,000 believed, or as when more or less shall embrace their practice. Being dependent upon those outside our institutions for our increase -- upon those who have consciences in their souls, and sufficient stamina of both soul and body, to obey their consciences -- we are numerically small, and who is to blame? As Howells says, 'I cannot think of one's being a Shaker on any other terms except, of course, a sincere conviction.' And he is correct. (52)

However, though Lomas's reading on behalf of the Shakers puts the most gracious of glosses on the "sincere conviction" comment, Howells's sense of his own heart -- and, presumably, the hearts of his readers -- as "natural" (700) betrays a bias of which he seems unaware. We see this again in his sympathetic account of a Shaker sister's funeral. Here he notes, apparently with some surprise, that what was "most observable in it all was the familial character ... as if these were brothers and sisters by ties of nature" (702) -- and as if the ties the world sees as natural are necessarily more authentic than the voluntary ties of community.

The tension between Howells's worldly ambivalence tending toward bias, his affection for the Shakers, and his commitment to truth in presentation, becomes particularly evident in his discussion of Shakerism and motherhood. He notes that the women at the funeral were "in far greater number than the men, as they are in the world's assemblies in this quarter," and that "a good half were children or young girls who had not yet

come into close question with themselves, and of whom it could not be said that they were Shakeresses" (702). He goes on to say that

[the] history which was not written could not be read, but it was not easy to believe of those who had passed their prime that they had devoted themselves to their ideal without regrets, not was it true of any. 'We are women,' one of them afterwards said, 'and we have had our thoughts of homes and children of our own.' (702)

Though he does not use the word "nature" here, Howells appears to go along with the world's notion of home-with-children as the "natural" sphere and concern of women. It is also possible, and even likely, that Howells wishes us to know that thoughts of home and children included consideration, at some point, of married life in the earthly order, and even of the 'carnal relation' -- also presumed 'natural' -- that this life involved.¹²

¹² Gordon and Bernstein note that some, though not the majority, of the sixty-three nineteenth-century marriage manuals they studied argue for a greater acceptance of non-procreative sex. Nevertheless, the "passion of sex", according to an 1879 manual, "can only be safely and healthily gratified by marriage"; "Illegal regulations produce physical danger, mental degradation, and social misery" (qtd. 671). An 1896 manual promotes the "Karezza", or intimacy "without crisis by either party," saying that in "the course of an hour the physical tension subsides, the spiritual exaltation increases, and not uncommonly visions of a transcendent life are seen and consciousness of new powers experienced" (qtd. 672). Gordon and Bernstein note that this is similar to the method practiced by the Oneida Perfectionists (672).

It is significant that in terms of sex, the contrast for the world between Shakerism and worldly life was not a contrast between total repression under Shakerism and mutually satisfying nonrepression in worldly married life. Sexual frequency in marriage was severely proscribed, and while we cannot know to what extent married couples followed the advice of the manuals, the middle class couples who read them were

This tension is even more apparent in the article's closing anecdote, which brings together the themes of home, mother, and heaven. I am quoting this lengthy passage in its entirety to convey its sense of Shakers and world's people looking at each other's lives and experiencing a complex range of emotions. Toward the end of the Howellses' vacation, we are told, the office sisters invited them for an afternoon visit:

After tea we sat down in the office-parlor and the best singers of the family came in with their music books, and sang those tunes which we had severally liked the most. It was all done with the friendliest simplicity, and we could not but be charmed. Most of the singers were young girls, who looked their best in their fresh white dresses and fresh gauze caps; and Elder William, Brother Lorenzo, and Brother Thomas were there in Sabbath trim. One song followed another till long after dark, and then there was a little commotion; the married sister of one of the Shakeresses had arrived with her baby, to spend the night. She was young and pretty, and duly tied back and overskirted and furbelowed, and her little one was arrayed in its finest, when by and by she came into the room where we sat. By some juggle the baby found himself on the knee of one of the brothers, and sat looking up into his weather-beaten face with a kindly embarrassment, which the good brother plainly shared, while the white dresses and white caps of the sisters flocked around in worship of that deplorable heir of the Adamic order of life; his mother stood outside the group with complacently folded hands. Somehow the sight was pathetic. If she were right and they were wrong, how much of heaven they had lost in renouncing the supreme good of earth! (710)

This passage, with the images it evokes, raises again the issues that Shakerism posed for Howells and, apparently, for

generally told to contain and manage their passions rationally -- appropriate advice, Gordon and Bernstein observe, for the manuals' intended audience of "entrepreneurs and their wives" (671-672).

his Atlantic readers: nature, community, validation, and the authenticity of choices. These issues continue to surface in the Shaker fictions in this chapter and in those that follow.

It is significant that the editors of the Shaker, in their reprinting of selections from the article, cut off this passage at the word "charmed." The Shaker editors' note introducing the excerpts explains that they "have endeavored to make [the selections] more interesting by excluding such matter as does not apply to every 'Shaker Village' in our land" (54). Still, we may wonder if there were other reasons why the Shakers did not reprint the rest of this passage for their own readership: they also did not reprint the quote from the sister about women's thoughts of homes and children of their own. Though the Shakers did cooperate with Howells on the article, they seem to have been holding two of their own concerns in tension when they cut out passages for their own magazine that they had approved for the Atlantic. They would have wanted to be sure that the world's readers got their facts straight about Shaker doctrines and practices, especially regarding their position on marriage as "not sinful or dishonorable," but belonging to earth and not heaven ("A Shaker Village," 705).

At the same time, they appear to have wanted to forestall questions that might arise among their younger members, and among those others whose zeal for the angelic life might be

waning, if they saw some of their own inclinations toward the things of the world -- especially homes, children, and motherhood as the world construed them -- reflected (and named aloud) in Howells's account of their life. The Shakers had cause for this concern, both on the worldly front and at home. Published depictions of them were often negative, and even friendly press representations could give conflicted impressions. For example, Scribner's Monthly for October 1871 had described the Shaker worship at New Lebanon as characterized by "an unthinkable sadness -- a horrible sense of error and misdirection" (Richmond 2:3241), and in July 1872 the same periodical had called Shakerism "an insult to the Christian world" (Richmond 2:3308).

June Sprigg notes that as far back as 1857, when the Shakers were still increasing in numbers but when sincere conviction was less apparent among newer converts, "a favorable article in a widely read periodical must have seemed like publicity of the best sort" (Preface viii). That year, Harper's had carried an illustrated article by Benson John Lossing, recounting his two-day visit to Mount Lebanon, praising the Shakers for their inventiveness and sincerity and finding "nothing in the entire performance" of Shaker worship "calculated to elicit any other than feelings of deepest respect and serious contemplation" (36). Nevertheless, he saw fit to end his article with a quote from "The Angel in the House," then newly published, which presents the celibate

choice as the "sad and solitary way"(57). His need, as historian Don Gifford explains, to affirm "views he shares with his audience" (73) required him to celebrate married love and the angelic condition of wifehood (implying, of course, motherhood) even at the close of a treatise on an apparently successful celibate experiment.

A similar dissonance appears closer to Howells's time in the issue of Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper for September 13, 1873, which carried a strange neo-gothic story, "Why A Woman Joined the Shakers," in which an old paper found in an abandoned house is discovered to be a story of betrayal and abandonment, written by an Englishwoman born to wealth and comfort who has been wooed, betrayed, and left destitute by a charming but cruel husband. She sees a vision that brings her across the ocean to the Shakers. The story is framed in another narrator's account of the house and the "strange woman" -- probably Ann Lee -- and her followers who "worshipped in her own wild way" with "wordless singing and delirious dancing" (10). The leader drew to her "those who were heartbroken by disappointed love," or "made wretched" by bad marriages, and "taught" them "honesty, industry, charity, both by precept and example"; she always gave to beggars, and the "society she founded, by following in her footsteps, in her most fitting monument" (10).

That monument, however, is elsewhere. The house we are told, fell into decay after her death, the society having set

itself up in another place. In fact, the desolation of the whole region -- closed church and schools, abandoned roads -- is blamed on the Shakers, who "drew the local populace from the faith of their fathers," so that they were "lost to the world," and "public spirit died" (10). After the woman's story, the frame narrator concludes that "most new creeds have their origin in an attempt to escape the human lot of sorrow and disappointment, rather than a new inspiration from God" (10). Curiously, in the same issue, we find a nonfiction piece on the Shakers with illustrations showing the ingenious modern appointments of a Shaker kitchen, dining room, mending room, and closet in intriguing detail, with captions referring to the "strange domestic happiness" of the "peculiar sect" (Hayden, Grand Domestic Revolution 45). And, as we have seen, Howells chose to end his own sympathetic article with the question of whether the Shakers or the rest of us -- the "we" represented by the complacent mother in modern dress -- must be right or wrong.

These varying and often ambivalent images impart some sense of the climate toward Shakers in the age, with its acquisitive and its nostalgic impulses running concurrently, in which Mrs. Raffensperger's "Shaker John" and Scudder's "A House of Entertainment" -- and, later, Howells's The Undiscovered Country -- appeared in the Atlantic. This age was also seeing a loss in numbers among the Shakers, which the public would have known about; a concern about this loss,

which might have been less obvious to outsiders; and an increasing interest among the Shakers themselves in some of the trappings of worldly living -- flower gardens, musical instruments, pictures, and a greater variety of decorative features on buildings and furniture.

The Shakers' own participation in the acquisitive impulse of the age was causing concern within their ranks by 1860, when Youngs wrote that the "condition as to the real value" of the Shakers' property or possessions and the conveniences and luxuries of life," was

now perhaps at a higher degree of attainment than at any time heretofore. ... The gain consists in continually accumulating buildings, furniture, machines, tools, and articles of convenience or fancy, the use of high colors of paint, varnish &c., perhaps more than is virtuous or proper. (Concise View ... 505-506, qtd. in Brewer 166)

In the succeeding years, this impulse toward accumulation and adornment came to be reflected in the increased ornamentation of Shaker furniture and buildings, a trend that not all Shakers greeted with equanimity. ¹³

Thus, "alien writers" who sought to use Shakers as material had a variety of options for appropriation, and their

¹³ One of the most striking examples of this trend occurred at Union Village, Ohio, under the ministry of Joseph Slingerland, who was sent there from Mount Lebanon in 1889. He transformed the 1810 office building from "a traditional plain Shaker building" to "a turreted Victorian edifice, complete with columned porch, ornamented cupola, marble floors, walnut paneling, ornate staircase, and modern sanitation facilities" (Stein 281, photograph 282). Stein reports that such so-called improvements precipitated tensions between the eastern and western Shakers (281).

choices help us surmise their agendas. For example, as noted earlier, pointing out the similarity between Shaker cooperative housekeeping arrangements and some of the goals of the domestic revolution would not have served the purposes of writers who needed to keep Shaker life and worldly life apart for contrast. Similarly, portraying the Shakers as rounded, complex individuals, troubled by their declining numbers and ambivalent about their own increasing worldliness, would further distract the reader from their stories' affirmation of the world's home-and-mother ideals.

In 1875, the year the Howellses first summered at Shirley, Charles Nordhoff's Communistic Societies in the United States from Personal Visit and Observation was published, devoting over 100 pages to the Shakers and including a chart showing 2415 residents in eighteen Shaker communities (256). The Shirley Shakers at this time had "the reputation of being wealthy" and "free from debt," but they numbered only forty-eight, less than a third of the community's peak population of 150 as of 1823 (Nordhoff 193, Brewer 228). The society at Busro, Indiana, had been closed by the Ministry in 1827, and the Tyringham society in Massachusetts, registering a population of seventeen for 1874 (Nordhoff 256), was closed the following year. Stephen Stein identifies the years between these two closings as a distinct period in Shaker history, characterized by "changing patterns of leadership, increasingly complex financial dealings,

growing social conflict, and alternate periods of religious vitality and stagnation" (122).

During this period, Elder Isaac Youngs of New Lebanon wrote in his journal that though the Shakers drew attentive audiences when they went out to "preach, hold meetings, and lecture on our faith and principles," their worldly listeners would "scarce get any conviction or real faith" and didn't "want the cross!" (qtd. in Sprigg, Foreword x). Even those ones who appeared interested in the Shakers' message, however, often only added to the Ministry's fear that the society might become, in June Sprigg's words, "a haven for 'bread and butter' Shakers, who were content to take what was offered and not give their souls in return" (viii). A falling-off in zeal is reflected in Shirley Elder John Whiteley's observation in his journal for 1876, among his references to his editing work on the Atlantic article for "Friend Howells," that the prayer meeting on 2 April was "not very spirited" (Journal copy, Fruitlands Museum).

Howells does not treat this concern in the article, though in his later Shaker fictions he would briefly note the touch of the acquisitive impulse on Shaker life: in The Undiscovered Country, a Shaker brother responds to the bric-a-brac collector Phillips's interest in a Shaker rag rug by observing that the colors are brighter than those previously favored; in The Vacation of the Kelwyns, the Shaker sisters call on Mrs. Kelwyn for a demonstration of her new coffee

maker. Whether Mrs. Raffensperger or Scudder knew about these changes in Shaker life during their time is uncertain. I have yet to uncover Mrs. Raffensperger's source of Shaker material, or anything else about her except the titles of two other published stories.¹⁴ Scudder, a well-known writer and editor of juvenile books who would take over the Atlantic editorship from Thomas Bailey Aldrich in 1890, had made frequent visits from Boston to Fitchburg, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1876, visiting his wife who was vacationing at a house owned by the Harvard or Shirley Shakers. However, even if these two authors' own contacts with Shakers had helped apprise them of anxieties within the Society over falling numbers and increasing worldliness, and even if they recognized that the Shakers had already achieved some of the goals still only promised in the world by the grand domestic revolution, such insights apparently did not suit their purposes as they sat down to write the Shakers into their stories of home and mother for their own shifting times.

In "Shaker John," Mrs. E.B. Raffensperger tells the story of a man, John Lawrence, who is led away from his Shaker home by both the acquisitive and the nostalgic impulses of the age. He is looking for beauty, and looking for Mother, and expects to find both in his ideal of home. John Lawrence has been placed with the Shakers as a boy upon the death of his own

¹⁴ "Who Killed the Logan Family?" in Potter's American Monthly 11:187 (Poole's Index 760) and an article called "Mormonism" in Scribner's 3:672 (Poole's Index 872).

mother. Growing up in the Shaker village, he has always kept a sense of beauty and "a certain air of refinement in contrast with his rude surroundings" (735). One day in the Shaker gardens he meets Lucy and Sue, two graceful young mothers visiting from the world, whose conversation makes him begin to long for a home of his own. When he leaves the community to pursue this dream, he is thirty-five years old, and is given only \$2.50 in compensation for his years of work, after deductions for the cost of his care.¹⁵ An ungainly but kind Shakeress, Sister Hannah, who has been his closest approximation of a mother figure in the community, sees him off and gives him food for the journey.

John Lawrence finds himself ill-suited to his new life: the heavy shoes he has learned to make for the Shakers are not in demand among the world's people, and though he learns a "new branch of the trade," he can only earn enough to live in meager lodgings, where he is too shy to make friends. Losing his job in a recession, he becomes ill, and his landlord tells him to go to the poorhouse. Instead, he returns to the Shaker village, called Bethlehem, and dies upon his arrival, holding Sister Hannah's hand and murmuring, "'Home at last, mother'" (743).

¹⁵ The narrator insists that the story and the amount are factual. The time of the story is not stated, but Lamson's apostate account includes a story of a Shaker girl who was sent away (and apparently not told why) with her second-class train fare and "one dollar and fifty cents! all told" (188).

The story is full of home scenes in which the mother -- whether present or absent -- is sanctified. The story opens in the "rose-covered cottage" where John Lawrence's mother dies (734); this idyllic home is then replaced by the "prim, stiff, and bare houses of the Shaker community," which, he tells Lucy and Sue in the garden, "have long been [his] home." "'Home,'" echoes Lucy, "'... home! but you would be much happier in a home of your own, I am sure'" (737). Later, in the city on Shaker business, he visits the young mothers in Lucy's parlor, "surrounded by their children, making -- so Brother John thought -- the sweetest home picture he had ever looked upon" and making him feel "carried back nearer and nearer to his childhood and his mother" (738). A home such as theirs now becomes his "end and aim in life," (738-739), and a part of the dream -- though, we are told, he "blushed vividly and painfully to think of it -- is a sweet-faced, pleasant woman" -- one with "the form and features of his mother" -- who would make that home all the world to him" (739).

When such a home does not materialize, John contrives to give his small rented room a "home-like air" with a few engravings, always chosen "with a tasteful eye", and "bits of moss or curious stones gathered from his occasional Sunday rambles in the country" (742). He may find a scientific pleasure in sorting and categorizing these stones and mosses, and a sensuous enjoyment in their colors, patterns, surfaces, and textures. Arranging his acquisitions from art and nature

gives him an outlet for his aesthetic sensibility, which the Shakers, according to the story, have failed to nurture. Thus, his rented room thus becomes the space in which he pursues the impulse -- scientific, sensuous, aesthetic, and acquisitive -- which Howells identifies with the age. John Lawrence is making a touching attempt to create his own space, personalized by his sense of beauty, and lacking only the beautifying and sanctifying presence of the angel/wife/mother.

As the prospect of the poor-house -- another painful alternative to home-space -- looms before him, the narrator asks feelingly, "O John Lawrence! is this the home that your heart longed for, and your fancy painted so fondly, for which you prayed and labored?" (743) After this outcry, the story continues:

He looked round at the little room where, after all, he had enjoyed more home feeling than anywhere else. He looked at the fading moss, the little pictures, the pitiful trifles he had so laboriously collected to ornament his room. "Poor worthless trifles all," he thought. They were of no value now; he must drag himself somewhere to die. Where? (743)

The answer, of course, is the Shaker village, a home that becomes a final resting place -- a bed and a grave -- and the scene of last reunion with a mother who is also a sister.

At first, Sister Hannah suffers by comparison with Lucy, who fulfills John's idea of a wife and mother -- and angel -- combined. There is "something in Lucy's voice, her elastic step, her slender figure," that remind him of "that dear, dead mother who had been all those long years enshrined in his

memory, the embodiment of perfect grace and goodness" Following Lucy and Sue through the gardens "at a respectful distance" (737), he mentally contrasts the "culture and refinement they manifested in every look and tone and motion" with the "coarseness of the Sisters' manners":

The very sweep of their drapery seemed to him marvelously beautiful by the side of poor Sister Hannah's scant skirts that switched so ungracefully about her thick ankles, revealing her colored woolen stockings and great coarse shoes. (737)

However, Hannah's kindness when John leaves the village makes him forget her "awkward figure, slouchy bonnet, [and] coarse hands and feet" and remember only "the womanly kindness that for the time beautified her" (740).

And yet, for all her ungainliness, Sister Hannah is the one who becomes John's entire family: sister, mother, and even, in their last uniting at his death, a perennially chaste bride. He has not been able to gain his ideal wife/mother as embodied in Lucy, but Hannah sends him off on his journey and welcomes him home when he returns.

It appears that Sister Hannah, like the Shaker life, has gotten away from Mrs. Raffensperger. The author has tried to show Shaker life as something other than -- and less than -- life in the world. However, the ambivalence in the way Sister Hannah is presented mirrors a larger ambivalence toward Shakerism itself. The story seeks to indict the Shaker life on many counts: it fails to gratify John Lawrence's aesthetic sense; it fails to teach him a skill that will support him in

the world; and it fails to pay him a living wage -- in the world's terms -- for his work. Nevertheless, the Shaker community gives John Lawrence what the world cannot: a home and work, a last refuge, and all that he comes to know of love after his mother dies. Thus, while the story seems to validate the Shaker life only as a sad substitute for what the world fails to offer John -- a place of rest and a motherly hand, -- it is still the Shaker life, after all, that offers him that much.

The story's view of motherhood is also ambivalent. The ideal motherly figures in the story are John Lawrence's mother, Lucy, and Sue, but real questions arise as to how attainable these ideals are. John Lawrence's mother dies when he is ten; Lucy and Sue -- pretty, graceful and sympathetic, with their cultured voices, sweeping gowns, tasteful interiors, and nursemaids who can take the children for the day if they decide to go on an outing to the Shakers -- represent a middle-class world of comfort and leisure that not everyone can live in. True, it is probably the world of many of the Atlantic's readers in 1872, but even that world was not immune to reverses of fortune similar to John's. The ideal of marriage as depicted in Lucy's home life, after all, depends on her husband's job. He is apparently away at work providing for the home when John Lawrence calls, as we never see him in the story.

Whether or not we see Sister Hannah as a mother/bride for

John Lawrence and his homecoming/death as a kind of wedding, we may call "Shaker John" a marriage narrative because it at least sets out to endorse marriage. It does this by trying to show us what joys the celibate Shakers and the pathetically unworldly bachelor John Lawrence are missing. Nevertheless, the story seems to run ahead of its author. As we have seen, John Lawrence's home fantasy is no more accessible to him in the world than it is among the Shakers. Not only that, the supposedly ideal wife/mother figure Lucy's ultimate effect on John is that of a seductress. Like an Eve, though albeit an unwitting one, this worldly wife/mother meets an innocent but vulnerable man in a garden, in what is supposed to be Paradise. She tempts him away until he finds himself alone and must come back to his lost paradise/garden/home to die. The thought that this lovely ideal of motherhood might be construed as unknowingly despoiling a home may never have occurred to Mrs. Raffensperger -- though we may wonder, as we might have in reading "The Shaker Girl," if the name "Lucy" has been chosen for its closeness to "Lucifer," the fallen angel. This reading of Lucy's role gives "Shaker John" a seduction plot, and thus another connection to the marriage narrative. At the same time, however, it makes the reader ask more insistently whether the story itself really endorses marriage.

"Shaker John" preceded "A Shaker Village" by three and a half years, and that "impulse of the age" toward a

"scientific, a sensuous, and an aesthetic way of life" which Howells would later describe is already evident in Mrs. Raffensperger's story. Like Howells in his article, Mrs. Raffensperger seems to want to say that Shakerism denies not only the aesthetic impulse (as construed in her age and Howells's) but also the so-called natural heart, with its (natural) yearning for a private middle-class home and a mother who can be beautiful in both angelic and worldly terms. Mrs. Raffensperger's intended message could be, 'How hard our times are, when a sensitive soul who only wants a home must turn at last to those charitable but drab and unnatural Shakers.' She does appear to be trying to use what she maintains as the otherness of the Shaker life for positive contrast, in order to demonstrate the very real suffering, individual and collective, which the harshness of her capitalist times has brought about; the Shakers, though ascetic and ungainly, do offer a practical version of kindness in the midst of an unfeeling age and world.

At the same time, however, Mrs. Raffensperger needs the Shakers for negative contrast; she cannot endorse, or even authenticate, the Shaker life because, to her, it denies the worldly constructs of home and mother, where, she would have us see, all beauty resides -- material, physical, spiritual. These two impulses are never reconciled in the story. At the end of "Shaker John," we meet the same question and implied answer that would close Howells's article three years later,

when a real-life fashionable, complacent mother from the world disrupts a real-life Shaker community on a quiet summer evening. Both story and article seem to want to say that the worldly life, however driven by the acquisitive impulse, is rendered finally valid through home-and-mother, and thus through the world's version -- not the Shakers' -- of "home feeling" for cultivated angelic space. Nevertheless, given the conditions of the age, neither Mrs. Raffensperger's story nor Howells's article can quite say this.

Horace Elisha Scudder's story "A House of Entertainment," which appeared in two installments in the Atlantic in September and October 1878, also brings the acquisitive and nostalgic impulses to bear upon Shakerism, and this story too seeks to appropriate Shakerism into a narrative that affirms marriage, home, and mother. Its worldly protagonist Alden Holcroft, like John Lawrence, is a young man of refined tastes and shy disposition. Unlike Shaker John, however, Holcroft has the education and means to pursue his sense of beauty. He buys an old deserted country tavern, which once furnished lodging or 'entertainment' for travelers but is now empty and overgrown. He then proceeds to entertain himself on weekends by remodeling his tavern and decorating it with his collection of antiques and works of art, returning to his humdrum job in a nearby city during the week.

Stopping to observe Sunday worship at a Shaker village near his tavern, Holcroft sees a beautiful young sister in the

dance and returns on succeeding Sundays to contemplate her. The elder, Isaiah Hanway, comes to visit Holcroft at the tavern and recounts how he himself joined the Shakers long ago with his wife and small daughter. His wife has now been dead for many years, and Holcroft learns that the Shaker sister he has been admiring is Elder Isaiah's daughter, Ruth. She has grown up among the Shakers in gospel relation to her father/elder. Holcroft eventually overcomes his reserve enough to speak to Ruth when she and some other sisters are out picking berries, and this causes confusion to Ruth and excited comment from the others.

One Sunday night as Holcroft is returning to the city, he sees that one of the Shaker dwellings is on fire. He invites the Shakers to use his tavern as temporary housing while he is gone. Ruth is one of the sisters sent to stay in the tavern and finds there a portrait that Holcroft has been painting of her, from memory, putting her in worldly dress. As she is contemplating the portrait and experiencing a complex range of emotions, she is discovered by Eldress Charlotte, who holds a bitter grudge against Elder Isaiah for long ago breaking up her potential romance with a Shaker brother, Nathan Farlow, by sending him to another community. Charlotte assumes immediately that Ruth has been posing for Holcroft as part of a deceitful carnal relationship. She is venting her rage on the girl through the portrait -- accidentally knocking it off its easel as Ruth moves out of her way, trampling on it, and

rushing out -- when word comes that Elder Isaiah has been injured fighting the fire and is dying. Ruth hurries to his bedside, conveyed in a horse cart by a Shaker brother cast as something of a bumpkin, while Charlotte, bent on revenge, proceeds to the same bedside by a different route to tell Isaiah of his daughter's alleged shameful conduct. Ruth arrives first, however, and Isaiah has time to acknowledge and bless her as his own earthly daughter before he dies, with Charlotte just beginning to hiss her vengeance in his ear.

Back in the city, Holcroft is sitting in a theater before a concert by a famous singer whose beauty of voice and person had made her his chief object of contemplation before he saw Ruth. Reading his newspaper, he learns of Elder Isaiah's death, and almost immediately -- by a coincidence which might have contributed to the Shaker Manifesto reviewer's impression that this is "an absurd and impossible story" (January 1879, 7) -- Ruth herself comes into the theater. She has left the village for a visit to her mother's sister, not knowing that this aunt's house has been moved to a new location and the theater built in its place. Their meeting prompts them to mutual declarations of feeling, and Ruth agrees to leave her Shaker home, marry Holcroft, and make a new home with him in the world.

They do not, however, move into the tavern: the real Ruth never lives in the house she first entered as a picture. In fact, as Holcroft is moving his possessions out of the tavern,

he comes across the remains of the portrait; not knowing the history of its injuries, but now possessing the real woman, he vows to say nothing about it to Ruth. Instead, he will devote himself to helping her "forget the shock of her transplanting" (452). At the end of the story, the tavern/house is once again abandoned and overgrown, waiting for a writer to refurbish it yet again to entertain the readers of the Atlantic.

"A House of Entertainment, like "Shaker John," is a story about transplanting, and about the ongoing search, in uncertain times and through continuous disruption, for a home and a mother. This story too leads us through a succession of home spaces, both Shaker and worldly, and we sense the absence or inaccessibility of an angel/mother/wife in each one. The Hanways have come to their Shaker home with Ruth as a child, and Ruth must lose her mother twice, first to the gospel relation and then to death; Holcroft seeks to make over a tavern into a home, where he enshrines his own painted version of an angelic woman but is too shy, until the closing lines of the story, to make her an angel-wife (and, we may assume, an angel-mother); the Shakers are burned out of the very Dwelling which, as it happens, once housed Mother Ann Lee; Nathan has been sent to another Shaker home, and Eldress Charlotte's bitterness has made her both a debased mother figure and an avenging angel; she vents her rage on Ruth's picture in a former house of entertainment for the world, which is now being redone as a bachelor establishment and put to use to

provide temporary housing (entertainment again) for the Shakers. All these home spaces are transitional in the lives of the people who move through them, and their impermanence as homes is repeatedly underscored for the reader by the absence of the "sweet-faced, pleasant woman" -- wife/mother/angel -- that Shaker John longs for to make "home" become "all the world" ("Shaker John" 739).

Holcroft, however, unlike Shaker John, can transplant the image of his chosen sweet-faced pleasant woman to his new home by means of his artistic skill and training, and his leisure. When he first sees Ruth dancing, she is in her own element. When she sees her portrait in his house, she finds that he has been taking her out of her element in his imagination, by painting her as "a fair and queenly girl" with "a wealth of hair, lightly snooded," and a flowered silk dress; her lips in the portrait are "half-parted" and her whole aspect is of "one who had waked to find herself in a strange world" (445). Her own charm with this new look now acts on her, as her charm in Shaker garb had acted on Holcroft, giving her a "revelation" of "a world of beauty of which she had not dreamed" (445). She throws back her hair "involuntarily" and looks at the picture "as if she were looking into a mirror" (445). By the time she and Holcroft are united in the world (as represented by the theater), the painted girl has been destroyed and the new one awakened. In Ruth's response to the picture, we see art giving her back to herself in a new way; by the end of the story, we

know that the painted version, however appealing, was only a first stage of her transplanting.

Even more than the portrait incident, the meeting of Holcroft and Ruth in the theater, contrived (and theatrical) as it is, emphasizes the story's themes of transplanting and transitional space. Ruth comes to the city seeking a temporary home with her mother's sister, but finds that the aunt/mother/angel-centered home has been replaced by an even more transitory space: a theater, which is yet another 'house of entertainment,' occupied by different audiences and different performers on each succeeding night. The singer, whom Holcroft has admired before he saw Ruth, is at the focal point of this space with her voice and presence. The stage is her home in the sense that it is her element, where her artistry is re-embodied and her gifts are given form; it may be where she "lives" in the sense that it is where she is most intensely alive, but she does not reside there. She has enchanted Holcroft within this space, as she now enchants Ruth, in the course of what could very well be -- for her -- a life of grueling concert tours.

Ruth does not know that the professional singer before her was the earlier object of Holcroft's distant and adoring contemplation; only the reader knows that Ruth, looking down at the woman on the stage, is seeing an image that she herself has superseded in his eyes. Her own contemplation of the singer, however, leads her to another revelation. "Did you

hear her?" she asks Holcroft ecstatically, when he returns from making inquiries about her aunt's new address. "Did you hear her? It was like one of the angels" (451). The singer's voice and art have shown Ruth that a worldly space can be transfigured by angelic music, even outside the Shaker gates. Thus, when Holcroft speaks his intentions -- like Longfellow's John Alden, whose name he shares, -- he and Ruth leave the theater, the world of make-believe elevated to art, in which they have both heard angelic music, and enter a new world, a new (but time-honored and socially sanctioned) married relationship, and a new house together.

The theater scene that unites the lovers also unites Shaker space and worldly space by reminding the reader of the earlier Shaker meeting scene, in which Holcroft first sees Ruth. Here, the Shaker Meeting House has become a house of entertainment in a different sense -- a theater for the world's people. Watching the Shakers at their dance, Holcroft at first detects "certain sleepy and perfunctory movements on the part of some, as if their minds were on some remote occupation, perhaps the gathering of roses for the distilled rose-water to be made shortly, or some like innocent occupation in their unexciting life" (311). However, the "main effect" of the performance is "of a simple-minded and single-hearted people, who threw into this service a fervor which expressed the ideal of their life" (311). Holcroft has been enacting the obligations of an ideal audience, watching the

religious service as an aesthetic event, but willing to suspend his expectations of "the grotesque" from accounts he has heard and to enter into the spirit of what he sees. Sometimes, he is "thrilled with a sympathetic emotion" as the Shakers march before him "to the singing of a hymn" which speaks of them as "pilgrims on their way to a heavenly home" with their faces "turned up with an eager, joyous look" and their feet seeming "only to touch the floor" as their hands push away "the world" with "an energetic gesture" (311).

Like the Shakers' dance as Holcroft sees it, the singer's performance may comprise both perfunctory technical passages and moments of genuine fusion of skill and inspiration. The singer and the Shakers might not necessarily identify the same sources for their inspiration. Nevertheless, when Scudder juxtaposes these performance elements -- and effects -- in a worldly concert and a Shaker worship service, he seems to be asking us to consider what happens when these moments of fusion do occur. In the best of such moments, a new reality is created, in which heaven and earth come together on a new plane of religious, aesthetic, and sensuous experience. The active, participating consciousness of the audience -- whether it is Holcroft's finely tuned sensibility or Ruth's innocent receptiveness -- is an essential element in this creation. Thus, Holcroft's aesthetic and sensuous contemplation of Ruth as she performs the dance with her "sweet grace" and "unconscious purity" echoes his contemplation, both earlier

and later in the story, of the singer on the stage: a beautiful woman engaged in a performance who becomes an object of both artistic appreciation and religious awe.

At the same time, Holcroft's contemplation of Ruth looks ahead to Ruth's contemplation of Holcroft's house and of her own portrait, and to her own later response to the singer's art. All these acts of contemplation reflect the desire to appropriate beauty, to acquire beautiful objects and experiences, in keeping with the impulse of the age which Howells describes. Holcroft is collecting beautiful moments of experience to furnish his life, just as he is collecting beautiful objects to furnish his house, and Ruth becomes the living embodiment of all the beauty -- material and spiritual, temporal and eternal -- that he is seeking to acquire and take home.

In this regard, Ruth's first view of Holcroft's tavern home-in-progress also conveys a sense of theatrical space; at the same time, it provides images of domesticity which equate home life with acquisition and wealth. The sisters are riding in their wagon, on their way home from berry-picking, and Ruth is confused by Holcroft's halting attempts to speak to her, once outside the Meeting House and now in the berry field. For the reader, the image of Ruth in the field recalls the Biblical Ruth at her gleaning and Keats's Ruth in the "Ode to a Nightingale," standing "in tears amid the alien corn." This Ruth is not in tears in an alien field, however; like Shaker

John when he meets the mothers from the world, she is on familiar ground, where she has been contentedly at home until Holcroft's interest in her has begun to suggest possibilities beyond her present sphere.

In this unsettled state of mind, Ruth looks into Holcroft's house as into a different world. One of the sisters, Miranda -- described by the narrator as "the image of laughing girlhood of which [Holcroft] was in mortal terror" (319) -- observes that there are "'red curtains in the window'" (319). "'What a queer idea!'" she goes on. "'I should think they would fade. There! he has left the window, and the door is open'" (319). Ruth, "by a sudden impulse," turns and looks:

The hall door stood open, and the light which came from an opening at the further end revealed, in a shadowy way, the rich cabinets and stately stairway which one entering the house would first notice as characterizing the interior. Pictures hung upon the walls, and sculptured bas-reliefs projected from the surface. It was a glimpse only, and Holcroft did not cross her vision, but she turned back with a shrinking sense of having rudely forced her way into his house. (319)

Ruth has probably never been to a theater at this point, but to the reader the red curtains suggest a stage, and the view into the empty hall a setting that stands waiting to be peopled with actors playing their parts. To readers who could remember Patmore's poem and its associations, the house could be waiting for its angel, and some readers would see Ruth as the angel looking into the house that lacks only her presence.

But though Ruth does not see Holcroft, she feels that she has somehow invaded or compromised him by looking, without his knowledge, at the home space he is making over for himself and infusing with his taste and personality. By looking at his arrangement of his acquisitions, she is looking at his identity, exposed in the process of formation.

It must cross her mind that if she should ever become the angel in this house, she would acquire not only Holcroft's art objects and furnishings, but also Holcroft himself, as she becomes his angelic wife and his children's angelic mother.¹⁶ We are not told whether it occurs to her that she would thus be acquired by him as well; Scudder's choice of title for the story suggests, however, that he must have been aware of this possible interpretation, by the reader if not by Ruth herself. The worldly appropriation of Shakerism for "entertainment" suggests some of the complexity involved in an image of home

¹⁶ In an irony that Scudder does not explore, the red curtains might also suggest a house of prostitution -- a site where female beauty was displayed and could be acquired, often in the midst of rich surroundings -- to male readers who had patronized such establishments, and to female (and male) readers who knew of their interiors only by reputation. An 1859 published guide to the houses of prostitution in the major American cities comments not only on the charms and manners of the various hostesses and "handsome lady boarders who are agreeable and accomplished" but also on the wines they provide and on each house's decor: one proprietress's "furniture is of the most costly, and the decorations and upholstering will vie with any we have seen"; another establishment is "furnished and decorated in the most superb style" (Document courtesy of the New York Historical Society, reproduced in D'Emilio and Freedman, illustration following 108).

that seeks to conflate acquisition, proprietorship, management, aesthetics, and display with both sexuality and angelic purity. It also suggests that Scudder is recording the appropriating impulse itself, with its sexual connotation, as a source for some of the worldly spectators' interest in watching the Shaker dance. Such a recording calls for more comment, implicit or explicit, than Scudder affords in this story.

Like Holcroft's tavern, the Shaker Dwelling which is lost in the fire is presented as a home space without a mother, angelic or earthly. Back from the berry-picking excursion, and alone in her room, Ruth tries to sort out her feelings for Holcroft. The narrator describes her emotions in words that evoke the Psalms with their images of the hart panting for the water brook (42:1) and the soul making refuge from calamity under the shadow of God's wings (57:1-2): she feels "as if chased by a hunter and fleeing to a refuge," and cries out, "'Oh, if I might but have a mother! Why do I have no mother?'" (440). We are told that she "could not recall" her biological mother, who, long ago, at her father's urging, gave up conventional marriage and motherhood for gospel union. Her cry, then, is for this bond with one mother here on earth, which she feels her Shaker life has denied her. She makes this plea in the same Dwelling House room where Mother Ann once stayed, and where Ruth has often "half-believed herself half-visited by visions of that saint":

So now, when the cry burst forth from her heart, she was half-frightened at the measure of infidelity which it seemed to denote, half-expectant that Mother Ann would answer her unbreathed prayer and descend to solace her. (440)

When she first sees the light of the fire through her window, Ruth thinks that Mother Ann is coming back; then she sees the smoke and realizes that the building is burning. The home she loses, in a physical sense, is the one associated with a divine and remote mother, rather than an earthly mother close at hand. Once more, then, we see Shaker life presented as a substitute for something more immediate and more valid in the world's terms. According to the narrator, the Shakers' love for Mother Ann is a replacement, a transplanting of love that they could not give to earthly mothers, either because they had lost them or because of the Shaker injunction to renounce earthly ties:

Denying the special mother, they allowed their reverence and affection to go out toward [Mother Ann], one who bore to the whole people a relation of divine motherhood, and the more thoughtful and pious of them brought to their half-worship of this woman all that remained of their intuitive love for their own mothers. ... 'Call no woman mother after the flesh,' they would say; yet they thought to retain the idea of a spiritual mother, freed from the substructure of an earthly antitype. (440)

Thus, the story shows Ruth leaving behind a home that is characterized by the spiritual mother who presides over it, and whose physical presence in the space has passed into legend. This spiritual home is not confined to the space of one building, but the burning of the Dwelling House becomes a symbol for the loss of the purely spiritual ideal of home and

mother, and, as presented here, of the inadequacy of that ideal in the world.

We can expect, then, that the new home, in this world, where Ruth and Holcroft will now set up housekeeping will bring together the best features of both their past lives. Ruth's spirituality will be tempered by Holcroft's sexual love, and his materialism will be tempered by her sanctifying presence. Meanwhile, her Shaker upbringing, like Martha's in "The Shaker Lovers," will equip her to run the house frugally and economically. Their new domestic space will be arranged for comfort and taste, but comfort and taste will not become ends in themselves. In this couple's new earthly union, and in their new earthly home, material and sexual desire will be brought into accord with spiritual values. The old patriarchal ideal of home, to which the man/husband/father brings material provisions (and occasional knickknacks) and the woman/wife/mother brings culture and spiritual values, has thus been reasserted; the acquisitive, aesthetic, and nostalgic impulses have been brought into accord once more, at the Shakers' expense; and the cultivated angel has been reestablished in the house.

But this predictably happy ending in marriage-narrative terms is one that the author sets us up to supply for ourselves. We must, at last, use our own worldly conditioning, our own plots, and our own language, to construct the married life of Ruth and Holcroft. Like the

story's original readers, we are equipped to fill in this space at the end of the story by the marriage narrative which our culture has supplied.

"A House of Entertainment," like "Shaker John," takes us through a series of transitional spaces, ending not in a grave/home but in one of Downing's dwellings -- "fitting, tasteful, and significant" (xx). And in "A House of Entertainment," as in "Shaker John," the appropriation of both Shakerism and the marriage narrative in "A House of Entertainment" to re-instate the ideal of home and mother depends on a sense of distinction, even of opposition, between Shaker life and life in the world. Scudder's method has been to make Shakerism's best features -- literally embodied in Ruth -- into collectibles. Shaker rituals in his story have become works of art for worldly audiences. Like concerts and pictures, they are beautiful and significant in their moment, but ultimately transitory. (Even Holcroft's painting, which is supposed to capture an image for posterity, is destroyed, and Holcroft's set-piece tavern is easily dismantled; the story makes virtually no distinction between material art and performance art.) For this same aesthetic function, Shakers themselves are foreshortened into caricatures: embittered Charlotte, vain Miranda (who will probably bolt for the world and a man at the first opportunity), and the bumpkin brother who drives Ruth to her father's deathbed. Elder Isaiah is a more complex character who stands for the Shakers' commitments

and values, but he dies trying to save the Shaker home. Ruth too has potential for development, but all that potential is directed in one way, towards the world's idea of the cultivated (and cultivatable) angel-wife. She may be intended to represent the best qualities of the Shaker life, which, in fact, run very close to the qualities Barbara Welter identifies as defining the cult of true womanhood: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (152). If this is so, however, the story seems to say that these qualities need to be collected from the expiring Shaker life and brought over to the world, where they can re-animate the home as the angelic space it ought to be. The task of this collecting falls to the artists of the world -- the Holcrofts, and the Scudders.

Scudder does not quite succeed, however, either in reducing Shakers to art objects or in subordinating Shakerism to the marriage narrative. Both Shakerism and the story form resist his efforts. He generates an atmosphere of change and displacement, mirroring the conditions of age, and expects this atmosphere to dissipate with an off-stage wedding; he ignores the question of whether a woman wants to be collectible by depending on Ruth's apparent innocence of such issues, thanks to the Shaker upbringing from which she must now be rescued; and he posits a greater degree of difference between Shaker life and worldly life in regard to the acquisitive impulses of the age than was actually the case, for purposes of an artificial distinction which history has

made more apparent than it might have been in his time. In a novel, he could have explored these issues in some depth; in a story in two installments, however, he can only open up these possibilities and then shut them down.

To various degrees, as we have seen, these two story writers of the 1870s seek to use Shakerism as part of a strategy of othering, of contrasts, in keeping with an impulse to return to an earlier version of angelic space. Mrs. Raffensperger, as we have seen, tries to appropriate Shakerism as a sterile alternative to the world, but her opposition of Shaker life and worldly life breaks down. She cannot escape recognizing that Shakerism can supply work, home, and motherly love when the world fails to do so. Scudder aims at this same opposition, but he must foreshorten both his plot and his characters, and try to incorporate Shakerism into the same aesthetic view he uses for the world, if he is to achieve it. Both stories thus reveal the strains that Shakerism imposes on this artificial opposition and on the marriage narrative itself.

It is not surprising that in 1880 the Shaker Manifesto reviewer of Howells's The Undiscovered Country would mistakenly attribute "A House of Entertainment" to Howells as well. Howells's first Shaker novel, like Scudder's story and even like his own scrupulously sympathetic Atlantic article, constructs an elegiac scheme around the Shakers that ends up foregrounding quaintness at the cost of authenticity. As noted

in the Introduction to this study, the Shaker Manifesto reviewer called The Undiscovered Country "a mixture of love story and ridicule of spiritualism" (207). In its love story, Shaker familial feeling helps enact an earthly courtship plot; in its treatment of spiritualism, though the possibility of communication beyond death is left open, the spirit world is shown, if it exists, to be less significant than this one. Howells's portrayal of Shakers as characters in The Undiscovered Country does aim at being affectionate and sympathetic; nevertheless, the novel ends up appropriating Shakerism into an index of worldly anxiety over the loss of home and mother and the conventional family.

The novel's love story is between Edward Ford and Egeria Boynton. They meet at a seance in a decaying Boston neighborhood where Ford, a solemn young journalist, has gone with his dilettante friend Phillips.¹⁷ Egeria's father, Dr. Boynton, is to conduct the seance. He has embarked on a study of spiritualism in order to communicate with Egeria's dead mother. He has been using Egeria as a medium, believing that she has a special power to communicate with spirits beyond the grave. When the doctor fails to demonstrate his powers at the seance, he blames Ford's skeptical presence and negative energy.

A missed train causes the father and daughter to end up

¹⁷ We met Phillips and Ford in the Introduction to this study, as they wait for the seance. Phillips has given us a version of the thorn metaphor.

at a Shaker village; this development is providential for the doctor, however, as he has already been attracted by the Shakers' history of receiving spirit messages. Egeria arrives ill from cold and the fatigue of the journey, but as she slowly regains her health under her father's medical supervision and the Shaker sisters' devoted nursing, she moves farther away from her spiritualism, which she has always viewed with ambivalence. Though the doctor's professions to spiritualism are met with reservations from the Shakers, the community offers shelter and support to the father and daughter as long as they are in need.

Ford, who has fallen in love with Egeria but has not admitted it to himself, arrives at the village on a holiday with Phillips, not knowing that she and her father are there.¹⁸ Once again, he appears just when the doctor is about to demonstrate his and Egeria's powers, this time before the assembled Shakers. When this attempt to call up the spirits fails too, the doctor becomes ill and despondent. The Shakers continue to make the Boyntons welcome, and Ford stays on as well, accommodated in one of the Shakers' dwelling houses, now standing empty, to await a change in Dr. Boynton's condition and a sign from Egeria that she returns his affection.

The Shakers actually become instruments of worldly love

¹⁸ Firkins finds "no plot" and "no organic process" in this novel. The "motivation", he says, is "exceptionally weak," and his notes "record seven instances of inadequately grounded acts"; when Ford arrives at the Shaker village, "art returns to its cradle" (93).

when they recognize the growing feeling between Ford and Egeria. Brother Elihu speaks kindly to Ford in a way that reveals Ford's own long-denied feelings to himself. Dr. Boynton dies, Egeria goes away to friends, and Edward too leaves the community. Some time later, a note from Sister Frances informs Ford that Egeria has gone away briefly but come back to them. When Ford returns to the village to see her, he learns from Frances that a man named Hatch, whom he has feared as a rival for Egeria, has gone out west and become engaged to someone else. Thus, while carefully abstaining from direct involvement in the courtship, the Shakers do manage to give Ford the information, and some of the courage, which he needs to make his feelings known. Sister Frances even points the way for Ford to the apple orchard where Egeria can be found, and thus becomes another kind of medium, reaching out of heaven to bring two lovers together on earth. The lovers marry with the Shakers' blessing, and end up in a suburban house where Ford, who has given up journalism for chemistry, outfits a laboratory in the garden and markets a household invention that gives them a comfortable living. Egeria shows a marked taste for society and joins the Episcopal church; the neighbors, musing on her dress and manner, surmise that she has left the stage to marry.

Shaker spiritualism, we remember, had reached its peak of intensity in the late 1830s and early 1840s. While many of the early recipients of spirit messages had apostasised when

the enthusiasm subsided (Stein 184), Howells had noted in the 1876 article that the Shakers "are all Spiritualists," that their experiences of spirit presences "have never ceased," and that they "have signs of an early renewal of manifestations among themselves" (700). Manifesto editor G.A. Lomas observed in 1878 that Mount Lebanon could yet "become a Mecca for those who are now, materialistic unbelievers in truths of spirit returns and physical embodiments," since "[s]cores of Shaker spirits" were reported to have manifested themselves there, under "Shaker supervision" which ruled out fraud (qtd. in Stein 321).

Spiritualism had gained ground in the world outside Shaker communities since the so-called "Rochester rappings" in 1848, when the Shakers' own period of greatest spiritualist activity had already passed. The rappings were first heard by a pair of sisters in the Rochester, New York, area, but the curiosity they excited and the issues they raised concerning possibilities of communicating with the dead soon led to a full-blown movement and a proliferation of mediums who claimed to have special gifts in this area. Ann Braude notes that whether "reverenced or ridiculed, Spiritualism was ubiquitous on the American scene" by mid-nineteenth-century, appealing to Americans because it not only provided "rebellion against death" but also "rebellion against authority" in the form of established religion (2). Spiritualism was also seen as a threat to the traditional family, Braude demonstrates, not

only because so many mediums were women, but also because Spiritualists promoted women's rights to self-determination in sexual matters.¹⁹

It may be in The Undiscovered Country's love story that the Manifesto reviewer saw a ridicule of spiritualism. When Ford asks Egeria if she believes the Shakers are living "'the true life,'" her reply connects identity with private property and private space:

'They are very good; but I have seen good people in the world outside,... I think they are the kind that would be good anywhere. I shouldn't like having things in common with others. I should like to have a house of my own. And I should like to have a world of my own.' (306)

Ford agrees that he would "'like the private house, too,'" but does not believe he could "'manage a whole world'" (306). Egeria replies, "'I mean a world that is for the people that live in it. When they die, they ought to have their own world, and they oughtn't to try to come back into ours.'" (306)

This exchange on the ordering of space -- worldly space, angelic space, domestic space, shared space, private space -- also bears on the question of the novel's position on spiritualism. The title is underscored in a conversation between Boynton and Ford: "'Who is it,'" asks the doctor from

¹⁹ Braude offers an extended discussion of spiritualism and marriage (117-141). More women," she contends, "stepped beyond conventional female roles because of Spiritualism than would have without it. In mediumship and its inherent individualism, spiritualism held up a model of women's unlimited capacity for autonomous action to the men and women of nineteenth-century America" (201).

his sickbed, "'that speaks of the undiscovered country?'" "'Hamlet,'" replies Ford. "'It might have been Job'" says the doctor. "'It might have been Ecclesiastes, -- or David'" (373).

They comment on the frequent misquoting of the line, which is "'The undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns'" (373). "'And Hamlet says no traveler returns,'" says Boynton,

'when he believes that he has just seen his father's spirit. The ghost that comes back to prove itself can't hold him to a belief in its presence after the heated moment of vision is past! We must doubt it, we are better with no proof. Yes, yes! ... The undiscovered country -- what a weight of doom is in the words -- and hope!' (373)

Taylor Stoehr claims that Dr. Boynton's unconscious motive in approaching the Shakers is not to learn about Spiritualism, or to find a home among kindred spirits here on earth, but rather to "harness" Shaker Spiritualism "to his own murky investigations" (257), based on his attempt to regain a lost wife/mother figure. and This, besides the tawdry trappings of the worldly seance in the opening chapter, may have contributed to the Manifesto reviewer's sense that the novel itself ridicules Spiritualism. However, the novel also includes the words of Brother Elihu, whose reply to the doctor's urgent offers to share his own spiritual insights, evinces both conviction and reasonableness:

'Spiritualism arose among us; our faith is based on the fact of an uninterrupted revelation; the very songs we sing in our meetings were communicated to us, words and music, from the other world. We have

seen much perversion of spiritualism in the world outside -- much error, much folly, much filth. If you have new light, it will not suddenly be quenched.' (174-175)

It is true that the attempts by worldly spiritualists to call up spirit manifestations in the book either fail or are seen to be suspect. However, the possibility of an existing spirit world, and of communication with that world, even if only in what Dr. Boynton calls the "'heated moment of vision'" -- or, as intimated in the novel's ending, as something for which "we must all wait" (419) -- is never completely discounted. The authenticity of the spirit world thus remains in the novel as one of the "more things" there are "in heaven and earth" -- another Hamlet reference, also used by the Manifesto -- than may be dreamed of in our philosophies, or accessible through our narratives.

The Shakers in this novel are shown as philosophical in their recognition of young love. When Dr. Boynton, newly arrived, asks Sister Rebecca if many of the Shakers' adopted children remain with them, she replies "a little sadly" that the Shakers "'have better luck'" with the ones they gather "'in middle life'"; they are "'apt to lose'" the young ones.

"'I see, I see!'" replies Dr. Boynton. "'You cannot fight nature unassisted by experience. Life must teach them something first. They fall in love with each other?'" "'They are apt to get foolish,'" the sister assents, "'And they run off together. That is what hurts, They'[ve] no need to. If they would come and tell us --'" (167).

Later, Sister Frances and Brother Elihu discuss their recognition of the feelings Egeria and Ford have for each other, even before the young lovers know their feelings themselves: Frances calls Elihu to account for his own remark that the "'worst thing'" about their young people, "'when they get to foolin', is that they run away'"; Elihu has said, she reminds him, "'that if they would only tell us honestly how they felt we would let them go and be married and we would be friends with them afterward'" (340). This is a fictional setting of the condition Howells had described in "A Shaker Village" -- the tendency of the young people to run away rather than leave openly, not because they would be prevented from going, but because they feared hurting the feelings of the Family (706). This may be an idealization, since, we have seen in Elkins and as far back as Sedgwick, the cost of love on Shaker ground could be high.

Concerned about the example Ford and Egeria might set for the young Shakers by "courting each other here, right under our noses," Elihu says,

'We all know by bitter experience how hard it is for the young to tread the path that leads to the angelic life; how cruelly it is beset with flints and shards, and how the flesh bleeds with the sting of its brambles. Do you want them mocked with the sight of flowers that tempt them to earthly pastures?' (340-341)

He and the other leaders have agreed that "'Friend Ford'" should be told "'that he's foolish about her'" without the "'feints and pretenses used in the world outside'" (341). Elihu

therefore goes promptly to speak to Ford in the empty dwelling house that once housed a whole Family and now is home to Ford alone. The depopulated building is an appropriate setting for their discussion of the Shaker life as a home which redraws the boundaries of individual and family, heaven and earth; it also mirrors the depopulated New England landscape in which it stands.

When Ford says that the world must have "'tired and hopeless people enough to throng ten thousand" Shaker villages, Elihu replies "without resentment" that they "'should hardly be satisfied with the weary and discouraged,'" and adds that people "'are not so anxious for the angelic life in heaven that they want to begin it on earth'". Ford points out that Shakers offer "'shelter,'" "'a home and perfect immunity from care and anxiety,'" and Elihu replies that they also "'require great sacrifices'":

'We put the husband and wife asunder; we bid the young renounce the dream of youth; we say to the young man, Forego; to the young girl, Forget. We exact celibacy, the supreme self-offering to a higher life. Even if we did not consider celibacy essential to the angelic life, we should feel it to be essential to communism. We must exact, as the one inviolable condition.' (346-47)

Ford agrees that they cannot "'have communism on any other terms'" but adds that their communism then "'perishes'" because they have no children from their members to recruit, and must "'look for accessions from the enemy'" (347). Elihu agrees, and comes to the point of the interview by saying that they are "'perpetually'" fighting "'the enemy within [their]

gates'" (347). "'Even such of us,'" he says, "'as have peace in our own hearts must battle in behalf of the weaker brethren. We must especially guard the young against the snares of their own fancies'" (347) Nothing,'" he concludes, "'is so hard to combat in the minds of our young folks as the presence of that feeling in others who consider it holy, while we teach that it is "'of the earth, earthy'" (348).

Ford is shocked to have his own feelings portrayed to him so accurately -- feelings that he has not acknowledged to Egeria or even to himself. On response to his protestations, Elihu says calmly, "'Nay, ... there is not need of a reason for love. I learned that before I was gathered in'" (351).

At last Ford blurts out,

'I have been a hypocrite, -- the worst kind; a hypocrite to my own deceit! I do love her! She is dearer to me than -- You talk of your angelic life! Can you dream of anything nearer to heaven than union with such tenderness and mercy as hers?' (352)

Elihu replies that Shakers "'say nothing against marriage in its place'" but goes on to say that while "'A true marriage is the best thing in the earthly order," it nonetheless "'is of the earthly order'" ; the angels, he goes on, "'neither marry nor are given in marriage. We seek to be perfect, as we are divinely bidden. If you choose to be less than perfect --'" (352)

"'There can be no higher choice than a love like hers,'" Ford proclaims. "'Do you assume --'"

"'Nay,'" says Elihu, "'I assume nothing. The time has

been when we hoped Egeria would be gathered in. But that time is past. She must follow the leadings of her own heart, now'" (353).

This scene may be considered the turning point of the novel, in that it is here that Edward realizes his own feelings and will go on to act on them. It is also the place where the "'love story'" decried in the Manifesto review -- the conventional courtship plot in the marriage narrative -- comes into maximal contact with the Shaker narrative. The marriage narrative wins out, not only in the Shakers' graceful recognition, already achieved, that Egeria will not become a Shaker, but also in the shift in the dominant language of the exchange. Edward Ford joins Roland Gray from "The Shaker Girl" and Alden Holcroft from "A House of Entertainment" -- a company of sensitive young men who can at last recognize their true feelings and articulate the angelic qualities of the women they love, and who are committed to rescuing their angels from heaven and giving them a home in the world where their natures -- both womanly and angelic -- can be housed and fulfilled. The outcome of the story becomes as clear from the language as it does from the events. The lover's histrionics are juxtaposed on the brother's quiet assertiveness, but in this case, the lover's words, coming to us from a world that we as earthly readers can recognize, carry more weight for us, especially since the "leadings" of the heart of the woman under discussion are already directed towards our world.

Once the lovers have overcome their misunderstandings and declared their intentions to marry, the Shakers discuss what their own conduct should be. They must, says Elihu, "'not withhold ... sympathy from the these young people who are doing ight in their order,'" and at the same time not "'relax'" their own "'opposition to the principle'" (413). However, when Brother Laban suggests they should "'Love the sinner and condemn the sin'", Elihu says, "'Nay, ... not exactly that,'" he is, however, "rejecting the phraseology rather than the idea" (413).

In passages like this, quaintness asserts itself over authenticity. This is not to say that this benign, elderly group of Shakers would not be good-humored in such a situation. It is rather to say that this portrayal of them emphasizes the aspect of their reaction that best suits the marriage narrative. True, the Shakers become assisting figures rather than blocking figures in this courtship plot; they become accessories to love by helping the lovers recognize their true feelings and by bringing them together. But their role in the novel is defined by the courtship plot rather than by their own life narrative.

If this novel were to center on the Shaker narrative, it would have to dwell more on the Shaker characters' thoughts and feelings: on their own effort to maintain their own principles while not condemning the lovers for choosing a different direction, and on their search for a phraseology

that could enact this quest. This focus of author and reader interest, however, would decenter both the courtship plot and the larger marriage narrative. Up to the turning point in the quoted dialogue between Elihu and Ford, the celibacy plot has been a viable presence in the novel, largely through the insights given to Elihu as a complex character. Once he fulfills the conventional role in the courtship plot -- the outsider and confidant who opens the protagonist's eyes -- the celibacy plot shuts down and the courtship plot takes over.

Howells's footnote when the novel's scene first shifts to the Shaker village should perhaps alert us that this is going to happen. "In placing some passages of his story among the Shakers of an easily recognizable locality," the footnote reads,

the author has avoided the study of personal traits, and he wishes explicitly to state that his Shakers are imaginary in everything but their truth, charity, and purity of life and scarcely less lovable quaintness to which no realism can do perfect justice. (161)

This avoidance of "the study of personal traits" may be intended to dissuade readers (and scholars) from the labor of trying to identify actual Shakers who may have provided models for particular characters. It may also serve as a disclaimer -- though not entirely successful, as we see from the Manifesto -- for actual people who might think they are represented unfairly or inappropriately in the book. However, at the same time, this avoidance has forestalled the possibility that the novel could offer a more complex characterization of the

Shakers: one that could, in turn, lead to a different kind of narrative. How the Shakers would have reviewed such a narrative, especially when attempted by an outsider, is difficult to discern. As Elder Frederick Evans said in a speech in England, published in Food Reform Magazine in 1887, "The order is, as yet, an undiscovered country [and it] will ever remain so for those seek to explore it, like Howells, by outside observation" (qtd. in Richmond 2:2289)

Perhaps Howells presents Ford -- a journalist, as Howells was himself in his youth -- as a self-styled "'born outcast'" (322) to show his recognition that his Shaker story is indeed being written from the outside, and that the writer always functions as an outsider. This suggests a possibility that Howells does not employ to full advantage -- writing this novel as a male quest narrative, in which, as Boone says, the "single or unattached protagonist existing outside the boundaries of matrimonial definition or familial expectation" (226) goes out to find the undiscovered country -- the unknown territory of the enacted imagination. As such a protagonist, Ford -- whose name means a place to cross a river -- has a range of worlds opening up to him, each with its own counter-traditional potential. His friend Phillips, the Boston dandy and bric-a-brac collector, whose attraction toward Ford was toned down from the original draft (Crowley, Mask of Fiction 65-66), implicitly offers a version of homosocial and even

homosexual bonding ²⁰; the mediums he meets in Boston, however fraudulent, still hold out intimations of connection to a spirit world; the celibate communalist Shakers suggest still other possibilities for entering worlds both here on earth and beyond it; Hatch, Ford's suspected rival for Egeria's affections, takes the ambitious young man's initiative and goes west to better himself. Even Ford's

²⁰ John Crowley notes that the term "homosexuality" entered the "social discourse on sex" as a scientific designation in a paper by Carl Westphal in 1870, and was further developed in the "(ab)normalizing theories of Havelock Ellis, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Cesare Lombroso, Albert Moll, Sigmund Freud, and others" (56). Crowley cites Foucault's observation that the "nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology" (History of Sexuality I:43; qtd. in Crowley 56). In "Howells, Stoddard, and Male Homosocial Attachment," (Mask of Fiction 56-82), Crowley quotes passages deleted from Howells's draft in which Phillips's homosexual direction is more evident, and links Howells's characterization of Phillips to author Charles Warren Stoddard, whom Howells knew at that time only by correspondence.

Kenneth S. Lynn interprets Ford and Phillips as reflections "in exaggerated and distorted fashion" of "two of Howells's images of himself": Ford's very egalitarianism holds him aloof in "caste-conscious Boston" and Phillips expends his talents in "time-wasting, trivial " activities, including collecting bric-a-brac (245). Lynn sees Ford's "unsuccessful love life" and Phillips's "undertone of homosexuality" as suggestions that "maladjustment ... marks the sex lives of both men" (246). He compares them to "hundreds of thousands of other Americans" of their time who "poured out of the countryside" into the cities and who "have lost the faith of their forefathers in the process of cutting their home ties" (246). Viewed in this way, Phillips's collecting may forecast the twentieth-century trend to collect things from the past as a safe way of recapturing it without confronting the larger implications of stasis and change.

writing, which he does not value (320), offers him a chance to create and participate in a different reality, if he were to enter fully into it.

When we meet Ford he is basically an unattached commentator who knows it is "'the nature of worlds'" that one "'can't be at home near them,'" but must "'be in them to be comfortable'" (322). Egeria awakens his feelings, and his journey, which began in a small country village that he left for the city, brings him at last to a version of suburban domesticity with her. They receive visits from the Shakers, and from Hatch and his western bride, and she gives more parties than he had expected. He also moves into work as a chemist, patenting a fire-kindling compound; in this new line he can work at home and no longer has to study people for a living. Nevertheless, as Kenneth S. Lynn points out, the ending is "distressing in its way" (251) because the compromises and adjustments of suburban marriage make both Ford and Egeria less interesting than they were before.

However, it is possible to imagine different outcomes -- different worlds -- for him, even though the outcome that closes the book is the most nearly conventional of his options. His journey to the Shakers and back, with its varying possibilities along the way, could be what Boone calls the "quester's linear projection outward from the closed circle of society into undefined geographical and textual space" (228) -- an undiscovered country of experience,

connection, and narrative. Howells's later Shaker fictions will move away from marriage as necessary way to dispose of his characters and his stories. Firkins complains that The Undiscovered Country is "symptomatic", in that it "embraces a social fact by successive sides or aspects" (93); this, however, may be the formal pattern best suited to the male quest narrative which this novel might have become. "Like the voyage of the Pequod in Moby Dick, Boone asserts, the "trajectory" of the quest narrative seems to "move in two directions at once, 'one to mount direct to heaven, the other to drive yawingly to some horizontal goal'" (Moby Dick 200, qtd. in Boone 240). The Undiscovered Country is not Moby Dick, but on its own scale it offers its own competing trajectories toward different kinds of realization and connection.

Critics of The Undiscovered Country have often assumed the same task that the novel itself assumes -- trying to use Shakerism to evaluate the world by setting Shakerism and the world in dialectical opposition. They may focus on spiritualism versus material reality, on city versus country, or, most relevant to this study, on celibacy versus marriage. For example, in 1924, only four years after Howells's death, Firkins complained that the Howells's Shakers are merely "mild, kind, dull persons" who are too "phlegmatic" for the "dainty office" of "enfold[ing] the birth of a love-idyl in their house" with the requisite "touching irony" (93). To

achieve this irony, these Shaker characters would have to be more other-worldly than they are; they must somehow be sharply distinguishable from other people if they are "meant to illustrate the opposite condition of true spirituality" (93) - opposite, that is, to the false spiritualism of the tawdry mediums of the world. Firkins' critical requirements for opposing conditions in a romance do not allow for angels who are so much like ordinary people.

Other critics point to the opposition of city and country as this novel's key to Howells's use of the Shakers to portray the condition of the larger world. Kenneth S. Lynn uses the island image, also associated with the ideal of home, to characterize the Shaker village: "a little island of bucolic beauty in a sea of rural squalor" (249). However, he goes on to say that "[e]ven the Shaker community itself is portrayed as offering no hope for the future of America," not only because of the old assumption that their celibacy must necessarily lead to their extinction but also because, in an estimation Lynn attributes to Howells, it represents a retreat from life (250) ²¹. Kermit Vanderbilt sees The Undiscovered Country as "a modern version of the pastoral, an updated

²¹ Lynn notes that "Utopian longings" were "a part of the Howells family tradition" (249). For a discussion of Howells's childhood experience with these longings through the teachings and influence of his father William Cooper Howells, a student of Emmanuel Swedenborg, see Olsen; Crowley, The Black Heart's Truth; and Howells's novel New Leaf Mills (1913), a fictional treatment of a family utopian venture experienced in his childhood.

Blithedale Romance (46). According to Vanderbilt,²² Howells "discovered in the contending settings of city and country a unifying frame for the cultural dislocations of American life" (14). He sees Howells using these contending settings in The Undiscovered Country in the "traditional mode of the pastoral: civilized man's temporary reunion with nature, whose powers restore him to physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being" (14), and sees the ending in the suburbs as a compromise, especially in the detail that Edward and Egeria Ford return to the Shakers for a month's vacation every year (46-47). This pastoral use of the Shakers, however, still depends on maintaining distance and difference between Shakers and the authoring reader.

In a similar vein, Joel M. Jones, in "A Shaker Village Revisited: The Fading of the Familial Ideal in the World of William Dean Howells" (1982) sees a "dialectical necessity" in Shaker celibacy as "essential" to the "resolution and final impact in each of Howells's Shaker fictions (86). The present, for Jones, is the Shakers' undiscovered country. Jones explains the "familial ideal" in Howells's fiction as "the socialistic communal concept, the concern for others in addition to (if not before) self, by which Howells was to judge the progress or retrogression of the nation's mores"

²² For previous critical treatments of The Undiscovered Country, Vanderbilt cites Cady 197; Fryckstedt 183-191; and Bennett 97-105.

(87). Jones cites Allen F. Stein on the relation of this ideal to Howells's portrayal of marriage, an issue I will discuss in the next chapter. Using this ideal as a critical focus, Jones does more than intervening critics in recognizing and considering "the enigma the Shakers presented Howells -- an enigma resulting from the changing cultural conditions and mores of his time" (87). In his reading of the four Shaker fictions ²³, Jones detects a "subtle change in Howells's attitude toward Shakerism (88), through which the Shakers emerge in an increasingly favorable light, while the hand of disfavor falls even more heavily on Howells's cultural milieu" (89).

However, Jones too appears to accept the "dialectical necessity" of an artistic and critical viewpoint that makes the Shakers "other"; a viewpoint that not only opposes Shaker celibacy and communalism to companionate marriage but also portrays the Shakers as living only in the past or the future, remaining "unaware of the life they are losing, the life they are not leading" in the present (88). He sees Howells's Shaker characters as living "by only a pattern of the past" -- their "agrarian economy" -- and "for only a potential of the future" -- the "'angelic life'" (89). This critical perspective does not encompass the possibility that choosing to forswear

²³ The Undiscovered Country, A Parting and a Meeting, The Day of Their Wedding, The Vacation of the Kelwyns; he does not address The World of Chance.

conventional marriage and physical procreation need not represent what Jones calls a "disregard for social realities" (88); nor does it recognize that the past, present, and future may be conflated in the Shakers' concept of a already achieved millennium.

We do not know whether Egeria becomes a mother, and the omission of this detail may be significant. The ending of her love story, however, places her in a cultivated suburban home supported by a scientific improvement for the hearth. Thus, like Howells's earlier article, The Undiscovered Country brings Shakerism and the acquisitive, scientific, aesthetic and sensuous impulse of the age to bear upon each other. In both texts, as in the other Atlantic stories about Shakers by Raffensperger and Scudder, the marriage narrative and the cultivated worldly home win out over the Shaker counter-traditional alternative.

Howells would go on, however, to more problematic treatments both of Shakerism and of the novel genre; as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, his experience of Shakerism may have contributed to his recognition of possibilities in love fiction beyond its preoccupation with marriage. Meanwhile, the Atlantic article provides a touchstone for considering his Shaker writings that would follow. It presents details and anecdotes of Shaker life, many of which would reappear in fictional treatments; it offers a scrupulously reasoned approach to the Shakers' views of marriage, while

recognizing causes beyond celibacy for the Shakers' declining numbers; it documents the acquisitive impulse of the age and invites us to consider other concurrent impulses at work in the period and in its literature, particularly the nostalgia for angelic space; and it raises issues of authenticity -- especially in relationships -- that his fictions, Shaker and non-Shaker, would continue to explore.

CHAPTER IV

"SEPARATELY HAPPY EVER AFTER": HOWELLS, SHAKERISM, AND THE NOVEL OF DISENGAGEMENT

"Why shouldn't we rejoice as much at a nonmarriage as a marriage?" asks Basil March, the writer-character in three of Howells's novels. Basil is talking with his wife Isabel, and this question and the following meditation on it come from A Hazard of New Fortunes, published in 1890.¹ "When we consider," March goes on,

the enormous risks people take in linking their lives together after not half so much thought as goes to an ordinary horse-trade, I think we ought to be glad whenever they don't do it. I believe that this popular demand for the matrimony of others comes from our novel-reading. We get to thinking that there is no other happiness or good fortune in life except marriage, and it's offered in fiction as the highest premium for virtue, courage, beauty, learning, and saving human life. We all know it isn't. We know that in reality, marriage is dog-cheap, and anybody can have it for the asking -- if he keeps asking enough people. By and by some fellow will wake up and see that a first-class story can be written from the antimarriage point of view; and he'll begin with an engaged couple, and devote his novel to disengaging them and rendering them separately happy ever after in the denouement. It will make his everlasting fortune. (416)

A story written from this "antimarriage point of view"

¹ The other two novels in which Basil and Isabel March appear are Their Wedding Journey (1872) and Their Silver Wedding Journey (1899).

need not condemn marriage. Instead, as many of Howells's own later fictions demonstrate, it can offer a range of other possibilities for consideration. Such a story or novel could be a work of counter-traditional testimony in Boone's sense, and could even propose a counter-marriage. In the last chapter, we saw Howells beginning to suggest such a range in The Undiscovered Country, though that novel still reserves its ultimate endorsement -- however ambivalent -- for marriage.

This chapter shows Howells appropriating Shakerism in stories of disengagement. Like Shakerism itself, these texts do not condemn marriage in its own order and place. Instead, they decenter it as a necessary human pursuit and as the essential focus of human interest and energy. By offering characters in situations and plots that do not always lead to and revalidate marriage, these fictions foreground other concerns in human experience besides finding and keeping the right marital partner. In so doing, they suggest other possibilities not only for their characters, but for the plots of love fiction as well. The denouements of these stories, and the events that lead up to them, thus perform two functions of disengagement. They separate couples who appear to be in love, showing that such couples need not lose their interest for us as they lose their absorption in each other; and they separate love fiction itself from a necessary preoccupation with coupling and conventional domesticity. In so doing, they bring Shakerism's plots of celibacy and

communalism into new and creative realignments with the marriage narrative plots of wedlock, seduction, and courtship.

Alternatives to marriage do not always lead to happiness, anymore than marriage always does; the couples who become disengaged in the fictions discussed in this chapter do not always end up separately happy ever after. However, the outcomes for the couples in these stories, and for the texts in which they appear, help bear out another claim that March makes in A Hazard of New Fortunes, when he muses aloud to his wife Isabel that people don't "change" but "develop" (422). Though March blames "the novelists, who really have charge of people's thinking nowadays," for "[bringing] us up" to think that we are changed by outside events, he is willing enough to use the language of the novelizing trade when he explains himself further: "There's the making of several characters in each of us; we are each several characters, and sometimes this character has the lead in us, and sometimes that" (422). If, following March, we consider that a personage, a character, in a novel -- like a human being off the page -- is actually a whole reservoir of potential characters,² we can better

² Henry James's The Portrait of a Lady was serialized in the Atlantic under Howells's editorship in 1880, the same year that The Undiscovered Country appeared in book form. When James wrote the Prefaces for his re-issued works in 1907-1908 he explained that his "dim first move toward 'The Portrait'" was "exactly [his] grasp of a single character" (47). James acknowledges his debt to Turgenieff, who had described "his own experience of the usual origin of the fictive picture" as "a vision of some person or persons, who hovered before him, soliciting him, as the active or passive figure, interesting

understand the people -- the characters -- in Howells's later Shaker fictions and the ways in which they develop.

Each of Howells's fictional personages to be discussed in this chapter contains the makings of several characters, as we will observe in considering The World of Chance (1893), A Parting and a Meeting (1895-96), and The Day of Their Wedding (1896). We will see how these personages develop, or are brought out, in different ways as different characters within them take ascendancy.³ What unites these people's experiences for purposes of this study is the role of Shakerism, both in their personal development and in the development of the

him and appealing to him just as they were and by what they were" (42-43). Seeing these persons as "subject to the chances, the complications of existence" compels Turgenieff to "find them the right relations, those that would bring them out," and to "imagine, to invent and select and piece together the situations most useful and favourable to the sense of the creatures themselves, the complications they would be most likely to produce and to feel" (43). Howells embarks on a similar task in the fictions in this chapter, in showing what the experience of contact with Shakerism, as a chance or complication of existence, might "bring out" in the various characters.

³ Cady notes Howells's insistence that "one of the central features of realistic fiction" is "its concentration on character, not incident; persons; not plot" (Cady in Howells as Critic, 196), and Howells's 1891 review of William James's The Principles of Psychology for Harper's praises James's work for giving "the unscinded reader" the "habit of looking at his mental qualities and ingredients as materials of personality with which his conscience can more hopefully deal, the more distinctly they are ascertained" (200-201). Howells cites William James as saying that often we "'are ourselves struck at the strange differences in our successive views of the same thing'" (qtd. 200), an observation especially relevant to Howells's presentation of characters' views of Shaker life in A Parting and A Meeting, as we will see in this chapter.

narratives they enact. In all their stories, Shakerism figures as a presence that influences the development, or bringing out, of character. Similarly, in all their stories, Shakerism figures in the ways that separation and disengagement are pursued with the same narrative interest traditionally granted to bringing couples together.

These last two decades of the nineteenth century, when Howells was reworking his experience of the Shakers and the marriage narrative, more changes were occurring both within Shakerism and in American mainstream society. By 1880, the year The Undiscovered Country appeared in book form, the eastern Shaker population, according to Brewer, numbered 1,178, "down 51.5 percent from the peak in 1840" (178). Stein reports a total Shaker population of 1,849 in twenty-one localities for 1880, and 855 in seventeen locations by 1900 (243). Brewer also notes that in 1880, thirty-five percent of the members at Watervliet, Hancock, Harvard, and Shirley were over sixty years of age (197).

This numerical decline, the advanced ages of the membership, and the increasing ratio of women to men brought about changes in the communities. More hired men from the world were needed to help in the shops and on the farms; the sisters' fancy goods became "the primary articles for sale" (Stein 273)⁴; and in 1880 trustee positions were assigned to

⁴ See Beverly Gordon in Chmielewski et al. 89-103, especially 91-92 on the tourist market for Shaker fancy goods. Gordon distinguishes between the "useful and ornamental" fancy

sisters for the first time. Karen K. Nickless and Pamela J. Nickless note that it is difficult to know whether the "increasing participation of women in the decision-making process" actually demonstrates a "commitment to sexual equality or a pragmatic approach to the failure to recruit or retain male members" (130), though when the North Union, Ohio, community first took this step it was endorsed in the Manifesto as "'in keeping with the leading principles of our church organization'" (qtd. in Nickless and Nickless 129).

Shakers were also interacting more with the world in different ways. They were venturing into investments and finance capitalism, with varying degrees of success (Stein 273-86); they were adopting more inventions and conveniences from the world; they were demonstrating a greater interest in education through inviting lecturers from the world and meeting to share their own reading and writing; and they were lending their support to reform movements in the world outside. Elder Frederick Evans had listed what he saw as the sources of the country's major social problems in the Shaker and Shakeress in 1875; Stein summarizes these concerns as "perpetual land tenure, poverty, war, slavery, masculine domination, usury, and the perversion of spiritualism" (304n122 and 498n123). Shaker sisters and brothers openly

goods (emphasis hers) made by Shaker sisters from the more strictly ornamental fancywork of worldly Victorian women (90). For a detailed discussion of the implications of "feminization" of the Shaker society, see Stein 256-73, and Brewer in Chmielewski et al. 133-47.

endorsed women's rights at this time, even though the Shakers themselves did not vote.⁵

Stein also notes a growing diversity (320) or pluralism (337) in Shaker religious belief at this time and identifies its main strands as spiritualism, characterized by "a rejection of materialism and an affirmation of the primacy of spirit" (327); an evangelical strain which was expressed by participating in revival meetings, sometimes with other churches, and a renewed attention to the Bible (328-29); and a restorationist or primitivist trend that looked back to earlier beliefs and practices (331-32), some of which had been relaxed over the years.⁶ Some Shaker worship services no longer included the dance by the late 1800s, and supplemented Shaker hymns with ones from the world. However, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also saw the Shakers' own publications reaffirming their principles. There was a reprinting of the Testimonies of the Life, Character, and Revelations of Mother Ann Lee in 1888, and in 1899 some of the collected writings of Sabbathday Lake Sister Aurelia Mace were published in book form as The Aletheia. Many of these writings

⁵ Eldress Gertrude Soule explained to me that Shakers did not vote because it would foster division in the community. In conversation, 1986.

⁶ Stein also notes that disagreement arose between progressive evangelical Shakers who followed the teachings of Frederick Evans at Mount Lebanon and restorationist sympathizers who looked to Kentucky Elder Hervey Eads for guidance. For a discussion of Shaker pluralism, see Stein 320-37.

had been published earlier in a Bangor newspaper in Shaker publications, and a 1904 re-issue includes a restatement of "those principles" that "can never be overthrown by the advance of science" and "have long been understood by the Shaker Order" (134). Of these, the "three unchangeable principles" remain: confession; a "life above the order of natural generation"; and "community of interests" (142-43).

The 1890s, when Howells's Shaker fictions treated in this chapter appeared, was also a time of enhanced worldly -- and fictional -- interest in utopian possibilities, and of a rising divorce rate and concern over the condition of marriage in America. Jean Pfaelzer notes that between 1886 and 1896, over a hundred works of utopian fiction appeared in the United States (3). Utopian writers, Pfaelzer asserts, "echoed social theoreticians, Populists [a farmers' party pressing for property and currency reform], trade unionists, and feminists who announced that the solutions to problems wrought by industry, immigration, and urbanization were now available" (5).⁷ Citing Northrop Frye's The Anatomy of

⁷ For an explanation of the Populist stand, see Pfaelzer 56.

Pfaelzer argues that this period's increased utopian interest came about in response to such conditions as the concentration of wealth and power, with seventy-one percent of American wealth owned by nine percent of American families in 1893 (9); weak enforcement of the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890; corporate anxiety over falling markets due to the closing of the frontier, leading to crackdowns on labor agitation, especially in the Chicago Haymarket riots of 1886; an unemployment rate as high as 18.4 percent (10); low wages; long work hours; and child labor. Pfaelzer also attributes

Criticism Pfaelzer also notes that the forms of these novelistic solutions grew out of the "narrative structures of contemporary sentimental romance, which traditionally celebrate a reconciliation of natural and social growth" (6).

Howells's two contributions to this utopian genre are A Traveller from Altruria (1894) and its sequel, The Eye of the Needle (1907), which criticize the acquisitive, frantic American society through observations of a Mr. Aristide Homos from an evolved society called Altruria, which "respects the helpful, creative, and rational qualities of human nature" (Pfaelzer 71), and, in the sequel, through the letters of an American woman who marries Homos and returns to his country with him. Pfaelzer claims that Altruria "came to Howells from memory and literary tradition rather than from history" and that Howells calls Altruria a "retrospective condition" which "resides in our capacity to remember and return and begin again" (76). He does not mention the Shaker novellas, which could also represent acts of memory on Howells's part -- acts of returning to his Shaker impressions from twenty years earlier, prompted by his contemplation of conditions in his

the rise in utopian consciousness to increasingly vocal protest movements from labor and supporters of women's rights. He dates the end of the utopian fiction movement in 1896, when the "newly elected President McKinley established conservative hegemony" over a badly troubled economy. For a discussion of constructs of history and narrative forms see Pfaelzer 3-25. See also Pfaelzer's discussion of Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward 2000-1887 (published 1888) 26-51, and analysis of Howells's A Traveller from Altruria (1894), 52-77.

On the closing of the frontier, see Frederick Jackson Turner.

world.⁸

In these same closing decades of the nineteenth century, Howells had already explored the dissolution of marriage in A Modern Instance, serialized in 1881 and published in book form in 1882, but suggested (by a performance of Medea) and possibly begun even before The Undiscovered Country (Gibson v-viii). A particular concern in A Modern Instance is the problem of migratory divorce, a practice made possible by differing divorce laws, which tended to be more lax in the western states. The New England Divorce Reform Society was founded in 1881 as a part of an effort toward making divorce laws more uniform (Riley 113). The years 1877-1881 had seen a 30.3 percent increase in divorce in America over the previous five-year period.⁹ Thus, while Howells's treatments of Shakers and of marriage in The World of Chance, A Parting and a Meeting, and The Day of Their Wedding show him mining his Shaker experience and impressions from nearly twenty years earlier, they also show him bringing Shakerism's celibacy and communalism plots to bear on the issues closely affecting American society and the American family in the 1890s.

In The World of Chance, the young aspiring writer Percy Ray shares Basil March's interest in trying "a story that opened with an engagement"; such a story "ought to be as

⁸ The Altrurian fictions deserve special study in terms of comparisons between Altrurian and Shaker principles.

⁹ See Riley 62-84 on changing attitudes toward divorce and 85-129 on the "divorce mills" (85) of the West.

interesting as one that closed with an engagement" and would "be very original"(374). However, he knows "the reader would not stand it," because people "expected love to begin mysteriously, but they did not like it to end so," even though life itself begins and ends mysteriously (374). This novel, which follows Ray's largely random successes and setbacks in literature and in love, may not succeed as March's (or Howells's) own "'first class story from an antimarriage point of view'" (Hazard 416). However, its ending brings together the favorable public reception of Ray's novel and the rejection of his marriage proposal by the gentle yet self-assured Peace Hughes.

Peace has lived in a utopian community headed by her father, which is now disbanded; it was not a Shaker community, but, like Shaker communities, it was called the Family. She tells Ray that she has been "'brought up differently'" from "'most of the girls'" he knows, and that "'in the Family they did not think that marriage was always the best thing'" (369). She has loved Ray, but realizes that she loves him no longer, and she has been afraid that he would "'blind'" her and keep her "'from going on'" in what for her is "'the right way'" (370).

As The World of Chance is a novel about authorship, it is not surprising that Ray, even in his disappointment, feels "a relief" at her rejection which he "trie[s] to ignore," all the while recognizing the situation's "unique literary

value"(369). Howells's novel appears to be suggesting that Ray, with his aesthetic distance from experience, is not good marriage material; Peace, however, does not plan to look elsewhere. "'I'm not afraid to be an old maid,'" she tells Ray. "'There is work in the world for me to do, and I can do it'"(369). ¹⁰

When Ray first meets Peace, she is working as a clerk and manuscript reader in a New York bookstore attached to a publishing house. She is committed to helping support her family which is centered around her father, now an aging utopian philosopher at work on a book of his own. Among the odd assortment of thinkers who gather around Hughes is Ansel Denton, a wood-engraver who grew up with the Shakers but is now married to Peace's sister Jenny and the father of their infant twin sons. Thus, when we meet Ansel, he has already made the choice that dominates so many worldly fictions about

¹⁰ Peace's independence and consideration of options links her to the concept of the New Woman, who, according to Lois W. Banner, was becoming "visible in education, in athletics, in reform, in the work force" (American Beauty 175). Banner notes a variety of ways in which the New Woman's independence was expressed, some of which do not apply to Peace. For example, Peace does exemplify the "self-assertion and vigor" of many female "athletes, college students, reformers, and businesswomen" of the time, but she does not evince the "desire for pleasure" that, according to Banner, prompted increasingly independent women to seek amusement at parties and matinees, and to flout conventions of "duty and submissiveness" (187). Peace does assert her independence by rejecting marriage and establishing her own version of community with her own work, which includes making a home with her bereaved sister.

For a discussion of images of the American Girl and the New Woman, see Banta 46-92.

Shakers -- to stay or to go. The novel treats his new difficulties as he tries to live in the acquisitive, competitive world of New York in the 1890s while keeping hold of his Shaker familial principles -- defined by Jones, as we saw in the last chapter, as the "socialist communal concept" based on "concern for others in addition to (if not before) self" (Jones 87). Thus, in this often unsatisfactory experimental novel, Howells registers two significant accomplishments which have implications for his later Shaker treatments. He departs from the model courtship and wedlock plots when he makes not only the rising but also the waning of Peace and Ray's love into the material of fiction; and he shows in the Ansel Denton subplot that the intersection of Shaker life and worldly life may generate conflicts over issues more troubling -- and, no doubt to the surprise of many novel readers, more interesting -- than celibacy and sexuality.

The "romantic story" of how Ansel met the Hugheses is recounted to Ray by a dilettante writer named Kane. Denton had appeared one day at the Hugheses' last communal experiment, the Family; at that time, according to Kane, Denton was a "'young fellow'" who "'always had the notion that the world was out of kilter,'" and "'wasn't very well himself when he looked in on the Family to see what they were doing to help it'" (131). Denton, Kane continues, "'fell sick on [the Family's] hands, and the Hugheses took care of him. Naturally,

he married one of them when he got well enough, and naturally he married the wrong one'"(131). Kane finds Mrs. Denton unsuited to be the "'guide, philosopher, and friend of such a man'" as Denton (131). In contrast to her sister Peace, Mrs. Denton is indeed a somewhat irreverent presence in her father's circle. Firkins finds Peace "unaffected"(170) but likes Mrs. Denton for the "mixture of the acid and the placid" that makes her convincing to him as a character (171).

Mrs. Denton is the one who tells Ray, and thus tells the reader, about Ansel's Shaker past. During an evening at the Hughes home, Ansel rises with a baby on each shoulder and improvises "the figure of a dance," letting himself go "in fantastic capers" while keeping "a visage of perfect seriousness" (225). Mrs. Denton explains to Ray that "'Ansel was brought up among the Shakers; that's the reason he dances so nicely'"(225). When Ray asks "carelessly" if Ansel has just been doing a Shaker dance, Ansel replies angrily that the "'Shaker dance is a rite'" and that to perform it outside its ritual context is to "'burlesque a prayer'"(225). When he has left the room, Mrs. Denton tells Ray, "'You must be careful how you say anything about the Shakers before Ansel. ... I believe he would be willing to go back to them now, if he knew what to do with the children and me'" (225). The reader is left to determine whether she is being, in Firkins's terms acid or placid here; she is probably being both. "'We might all go back with Ansel,'" she goes on, "'and they could

distribute us round in the different Families'" (225).

Her next musings provide a link with the Atlantic article and thus reveal where Howells found the germ of Ansel's story.

"'I wonder,'" she says,

'if Ansel's bull is hanging up in the South Family barn yet? You know, ... he painted a red bull on a piece of shingle when they were painting the barn one day, and nailed it up in a stall; when the elders found it they labored with him, and then Ansel left the community, and went out in the world. But they say, once a Shaker always a Shaker, and I believe he's had a bad conscience ever since he left them.' (225-226)

Fourteen years earlier, Howells had remarked in his article that while the Shakers' "handsome counterpanes" are "relics" of their "former skill and taste," and that the sisters "are still skilled in braiding palm-leaf hats and in the old-fashioned art of hooking rugs", he still "would not persuade the reader that any Shaker family is otherwise a school of art" in the worldly sense ("A Shaker Village" 708). He had gone on to recount, however, that he did see "one painting" at Shirley: a "vigorous sketch in oil of a Durham bull" which was "nailed to the side of a stall far up in the vast gray barn" (708). This representation was "the work of a boy who was in the family years ago; but he never became a Shaker." Howells muses that it "would be interesting to know what he did become" (708). In The World of Chance, Howells gives the long-departed Shaker boy a name, an adult character, and a post-Shaker history.

Mrs. Denton's account may contain actual information that

Howells heard at Shirley in connection with the bull painting. The elders may have "labored" over the picture with a real boy who grew up to be the fictional Ansel. They may have chastised him for acting on an artistic impulse to create something that was not strictly useful; they may also have sought to make him confess and exorcise any curiosity he might have been harboring about male potency and sexual function, which the bull might represent. ¹¹

As an adult in Howells's novel, Ansel is a tender and fiercely protective father. His wife accuses him half-seriously of spoiling the twins so much that they might "grow up capitalists" (224). In New York, he is homesick for the old communal home, the Family: it "'was a pretty place!'" his wife tells Ray, adding that Ansel "'almost dies when goes into the Park; it brings it all back so'" (115). This nostalgia is not specifically focused on his Shaker childhood, but on a communalist, familial American past that numbers Shakerism among its lost ideals. When Ray says he too is homesick, for his own town of Midland, Denton says simply,

'I've been there. I think those small cities are more deadly than New York. They're still trying to get rid of the country, and New York is trying to get some of it back. If I had my way, there wouldn't be a city, big or little, on the whole

¹¹ Delicacy of language regarding the animal body continued into the 1920s and 1930s. A sister conducting visitors through the barn pointed out the bull as the "master of the herd" (Marge Emery, 1986). Eldress Bertha Lindsay said that questions about reproduction were answered frankly in her time, however. Of course, euphemisms about the body were common in the world outside as well.

continent (116).

If Ansel had his way, there would also be no conflict between individual creativity and communal good. Unfortunately, as Ray hears from Mrs. Denton on another visit, Ansel has "'just hit on an invention that's going to make us rich, and throw all the few remaining engravers out of work, when he gets it finished'" (194). His "'only hope,'" his wife continues, "'is that the invention will turn out a failure'" (194). Ansel, lacking his wife's gift to be ironic, agonizes over the question of "'whether a man ought not to kill his creative thought as he would a snake, if he sees that there is any danger of its taking away work another man lives by'" (195). Ansel appears to decide, as his wife says, that he can "'do more good than harm'" with his invention (227). However, he changes his mind. As his father-in-law Hughes tells Ray, Ansel's "'misgivings as to the moral bearing of his invention'", his "'morbid scruple in the matter,'" and an "'unpractical element'" in his "'nature'" at last lead him to destroy "'every vestige of result which could commend [his invention] to the people interested in it'" (244), believing he is acting "'in obedience to an inner Voice which governs his conduct'" (245).

Hughes calls this Voice "'a survival of some supernatural experiences of [Ansel's] among the Shakers,'" which has "'lately been silent'" and has become "'a sort of joke'" in the household (245). However, it has reasserted itself in

combination with "'a notion of expiation, of sacrifice,'" which is "'perhaps a survival of [Ansel's] ancestral Puritans'" (245). Thus, when the twins die suddenly of scarlet fever, Ansel feels a call to expiation compounded with his grief and recrimination. Meeting Ray by chance in the park, he tells him that his invention was "'nothing'" -- "'a common crime'" (267); it is worse, Ansel feels, that he let the children die by allowing them to be exposed to the disease. However, when the twin voices -- from his Shaker spiritualism and his Puritan guilt -- are both speaking to him at once, the terrifying and chilling message, as he receives it, is that his real crime is a failure of atonement: he comes to believe that "'ought to have given them'" and "'not waited for them to be taken'" (268). His despair over the question of atonement leads him to suicide.

It is possible to read Ansel as a pathetic example of the failure of Shaker life to prepare its children to live in the world. ¹² Ansel, however, is not a Shaker John. Like John Lawrence, he finds that Shakerism does not reward his

¹² This was a major criticism in Lamson's 1848 apostate account. "So far as I know," he concedes, "the children are well-clothed, well-fed, and well-lodged; and not required to work beyond their strength" (174). However, he goes on to say that "although most of the children which they bring up, leave them on coming to their seniority, yet they are particularly unfitted by their education, and manners, to withstand the temptation, and meet the competitions of the world. They know not how to assume any care, or responsibility even for themselves. They have been clothed, and fed, and their labors directed by others. They are educated for the slavery of Shakerism" (176).

aesthetic sense; he leaves the community in an incident over creating a picture. Unlike Shaker John, though, Ansel does find a home in the world, passing first through the Hugheses' communal but non-celibate Family that gives him a transitional space between his Shaker village childhood and adult life in New York City. This intermediating community also gives him a vivacious wife who does love him in her way and who can balance his visionary strain with her practicality and wry humor. In their marriage, the husband rather than the wife is the angel in the house, especially, as Ray notes, in his devoted ministering to the children. His name, in fact, differs from "Angel" by only one letter. And Ansel's skills, as he himself finds, are all too marketable in the city. This makes his involvement in the uncertain economic conditions of his time more problematic than Shaker John's.

Ansel's unfitness for the world, however, unlike Shaker John's, cannot be simplistically attributed either to the other-worldly ideals of his Shaker upbringing, or to the commercial and acquisitive impulses of his age. As a character, he represents Howells's view of the condition of late nineteenth-century America, unable to reconcile the conflicting voices of its past with the exigencies of its present. Howells has appropriated Shakerism -- especially its familial claims -- to represent one of these voices. Shakerism is clearly a thorn in Howells's flesh here, as it is in Ansel's, because it calls attention both to an ideal of

shared commitment and mutual implication, and to the difficulty of living up to that ideal.

Critics have discussed this ideal in terms of what Clara and Rudolf Kirk have identified as Howells's concept of "complicity," first articulated in his 1887 novel, The Minister's Charge, and upon which his "familial ideal" depends. Evil, according to this ideal, exists in an community or in an age because of a failure of involvement, because the virtuous people "fancied themselves indifferent spectators" (Howells, The Minister's Charge 458, qtd. in McMurray in 489). As William Mc Murray explains, Howells does not deny "either man's freedom of action or his moral responsibility," but at the same time tries to show the "share which society has in each man's sin" (489). Thus, part of the difficulty in living up to a complicitous relation, as Ray says when trying to commiserate with the bereaved Ansel, "'a man can't expiate alone; he makes a lot of other people expiate with him'" (267). "'Yes'," Ansel replies, "'you can't even sin alone'" (267).

Ansel, as Basil March would say, is a character who has the making of several characters in him (Hazard 422): Shaker, artist, ex-Shaker, engraver, inventor, and member of families -- the Shakers, the Hughes communal Family, the Hughes nuclear family, and the larger human community that includes the workers his creative gifts would displace. Peace, too, could develop into Ray's wife, blending that character with certain

traits of the more autonomous woman she does become. In this novel's world, chance -- sometimes beneficent, sometimes cruel -- is the major force determining which of each person's internal characters gain or lose ascendancy. Ansel and Peace in particular have various internal characters which various chance events and circumstances might cause to develop.

This choice of chance as subject may explain why the plot of this novel is disjointed even for Howells. Firkins, while admitting that the literary and journalistic urban life Howells describes here is itself "granular if not strictly fragmentary," still disparagingly calls The World of Chance "a book of dots and particles" (168). However, it may be the book's granular structure which enables it to decenter both the marriage plot and the standard Shaker-choice (read "celibacy-versus- marriage/home/mother") plot. In A Parting and a Meeting and The Day of Their Wedding, both published in book form three years later, Howells uses the briefer novella form and a newly enriched focus on the possibilities of marriage and Shakerism as themes that may inform each other. Perhaps his foray into The World of Chance, with all its fragments and false starts and dots and particles, enabled him to write his way to this perspective.

Howells's novella A Parting and a Meeting was serialized over three issues of Cosmopolitan in 1894 and 1895 and appeared in book form the following year. Like The World of Chance, it has detectable roots in the Atlantic article, in

which Howells describes a Shaker called Father Abraham, over ninety and very deaf, who had come as a young man to visit the community "from idle curiosity with his betrothed" (705). The community's "life and faith" made an "instant impression" on the young man, and he "proposed" to the young woman -- in a new variation on the courtship plot -- that instead of marrying they become Shakers together (705). She refused, "after due thought," but "gave him back his promise" in order not to be "a hindrance to his wish" (705). To the Shakers, Howells speculates in the article,

it seems right that he should have accepted her sacrifice; to some of the world-outside it will seem tragic. Who knows? He has never regretted his course; she took another mate, saw her children about her knee, and died long ago, after a life that was no doubt as happy as most. But perhaps in an affair like that, a girl's heart had supreme claims. Perhaps there are some things one ought not to do, even with the hope of winning heaven. (705)

Howells appears to have been unable to rejoice at the nonmarriage of this couple; nevertheless, their true story offered him an idea for a fiction that could begin with an engaged couple and proceed to disengage them. The resulting novella of disengagement, A Parting and a Meeting, however, not only subverts the courtship and wedlock plots, but also problematizes both the happily- and the separately-happy-ever-after outcomes. While in The World of Chance, Shakerism figures as an influence and a voice from the past, in this novella it serves as a present force that determines which of the "characters" within the young woman and the young man will

take the lead.

Howells also notes in the article that Father Abraham had developed a system of musical notation for the Shakers, and this detail identifies him as Abraham Whitney, a Shirley brother who was also a music teacher.¹³ Besides the story of the broken engagement, Howells appropriated another feature of this real Shaker's story: the elderly man's requirement that his bed

be made up with a hollow in the middle from top to bottom, which he called his trough, and which he strictly forbade anyone to meddle with; this was all he asked of earth after ninety-six years, not to disturb his trough (709).

For Howells's fictional treatment of Father Abraham's story, he renamed the young man Roger Burton and made him a pensive schoolmaster inclined to be "rather notional" (186). He also created Roger's fiancée in Chloe Mason.

In the novella, Howells imagines a meeting sixty years after the lovers' parting. Chloe, now a widow nearing eighty, comes back to the Shaker village to visit Roger, and contrasts their lives in a long monologue. Roger, like his original Father Abraham, is now nearly ninety and, at the Meeting Chloe attends, he does not "always reach the close of a bar with the

¹³ Whitney's system used upper- and lower-case letters and numbers for notes. He traveled from Shirley to the Canterbury and Enfield communities, upon "solicitation," to teach his system to the Shakers there (White and Taylor 338). It remained in use until the later nineteenth century, when the use of musical instruments replaced unaccompanied voices, and when part-singing replaced the old unison style; this change coincided with the first inclusion of hymns in the Manifesto, which reached both a worldly and a Shaker audience.

remainder of the singers" (469). Unlike Father Abraham, he is not deaf, but his mind, as the new elder tells Chloe, "comes and goes a little" (470). He seems to remember Chloe only dimly, and does not always connect her with the girl to whom he was once engaged. She talks on, telling him of her feelings when they parted, which she could not articulate at the time, and of her marriage, her husband's financial success, the loss of her five sons ¹⁴ and the happy marriages of her two daughters, and her pleasure in her grandchildren, one of whom is now waiting for her outside.

"'Yes,'" says Chloe,

¹⁴ Howells's older daughter, Winnifred, had died in 1889 in her twenty-sixth year at the Philadelphia clinic of S. Weir Mitchell. John S. Crowley discusses the family dynamic of illness in "Winnifred Howells and the Economy of Pain," in The Mask of Fiction 83-114.

A gifted young woman, Winnifred had suffered for ten years from physical and 'nervous' symptoms now connected to anorexia nervosa, though the diagnosis cannot be made with certainty. She was undergoing Mitchell's famous and controversial rest cure when she died of cardiac arrest. Though an autopsy determined an organic cause of death, both parents experienced feelings of guilt as well as loss. Elinor had opposed sending Winnifred away from home, but had yielded to Howells's opinion, and he had now to contend with the reproach of memories of his own early homesickness whenever he thought of Winnifred's dying alone. After Winnifred's death, writes John H. Crowley, Howells spoke of her "as a veritable angel of the house -- with her 'unearthly loveliness,' her 'precious' and 'rare' gifts, her 'exquisite ideals,' her 'innocent illusions,' her 'noble pride unalloyed with vanity, her beautiful, never-failing dignity of heart and mind' (104, citing Howells' memoir Winnifred Howells 3, 6-8). Crowley compares Howells's characterization of Winnifred to Eva in Uncle Tom's Cabin and Beth in Little Women: "'She was on the earth, but she went through the world aloof in spirit, with a kind of surprise. She was of so divine a truthfulness that in her presence I felt the shame of insincerity as in no other'" (104).

'I've been through it all, Roger. I've had the best that the earth could give, and I've seen my children round me, and now my grandchildren; and yet I don't know, Roger, but what I'd have done as well to stay with you that day. What do you think?' She leaned forward and took his old hand between her aged palms, and softly caressed it. 'You have been here ever since, and you've lived the angelic life, and you've had peace. You've escaped all the troubles of this world. You haven't had a wife to pester you; and you haven't had to go down into the grave with your children, and want to stay there with them, when they died before you. You haven't seen your partner die by inches before your eyes. Your days have flowed right on here, with no sorrow and no trouble: you've done what you thought was right, and you've had your reward. Do you think I'd better have stayed with you that day?' The question, the caressing touch, apparently brightened him into consciousness of her again. He laughed, as if it all affected him humorously. 'Yee, I've lived the angelic life, as you say, and it's been all I ever expected. I've had peace, I don't deny that, and I haven't had any sorrow or trouble; and still I'm not sure but I'd have done about as well to go with you, Chloe.' (474)

The story closes as Roger's recognition of Chloe fades again, and he begins declaiming that the sisters who make up his bed keep forgetting to leave the hollow. The final words are Chloe's to her impatient granddaughter: "'I guess Roger and I have about got through'" (474). In the article account of Father Abraham's conversion, Howells had seemed to direct more of his sympathy to the claims of "a girl's heart" (705), and in the article's closing image the complacent young mother, however frivolous her stylish dress, had appeared at some advantage over the white-clad sisters hovering in worship over the baby. The novella from nearly twenty years later ends with the same contrast between Shaker life and worldly life, enacted in a scene that brings together an elderly brother and

a mother figure visiting from the world. This visiting mother is not so complacent, however, and she has grown old. Now, as Joel M. Jones says, "Neither Roger nor Chloe seems convinced of the wisdom of their respective decisions," and "Neither was Howells" (92).

The ambivalence of the ending extends beyond the question of whether Roger or Chloe has made a right or a wrong choice. Firkins notes that he is "not sure but that the encounter ... does not embody the bitterest moment" in all of Howells's work. "The vanity of both choices, the worldly and the ascetic," he continues, "seems intimated in the impartial ravage which has made the man a dotard and the woman a featherbrain" (95). Citing Firkins, Jones observes that the meeting's "sardonic tinge" represents a shift in perspective over the years since The Undiscovered Country. If Howells, says Jones, was willing in 1880 "to reject Shakerism (in spite of its admirable advocacy of a familial ideal) simply for pragmatic reasons (progress necessitates progeny), by 1896 he was equally willing to reject the 'world outside' simply for idealistic reasons (the progeny were not, by his standards, progressing)" (92).

However, Firkins may be oversimplifying when he assumes that Roger, if he is indeed a dotard, has become one through a life so peaceful that it has made no demands on his faculties, or that Chloe, if she is a featherbrain, has become one due to social conditions in the restless and acquisitive

outside world. Chloe in old age is no more voluble than she was as a young woman; her monologue, though long, is affecting and shows an ongoing desire to connect. Similarly, even before Roger joins the Shakers, his way of looking at Chloe as if he does not see her (185,314) alerts us to his emotional distance from people as individuals. This distance could protect him, wherever he is, from "sorrow or trouble" as perceived by Chloe.

We see this abstract, de-personalized quality in Roger's love early in the story. He can define it only by saying that when he and Chloe have been apart he was unable to picture her face in his mind: "'You were just something sweet and true, something dear and lovely, but you had no form'" (185). He admits that he loves her beauty, but tells her that he fell in love with something behind her looks, something "'more you than all your looks are'" (187). He vows that their own love "'cannot die'" because they love "'what is best in each other'" (187).

The irony in this claim is that it may be true: perhaps loving what he sees as best in her does require him to love her in gospel sisterhood rather than according to marriage conventions. She, however, has other hopes -- for sexual love, for a home and children, for the social status of a married woman, and, perhaps most important, for a unique form in his eyes. His own personality and outlook render him unable to grant her this particular version of authenticity.

When Chloe, on her return visit, sees Roger as an old man, the other-worldly "long-remembered rapture" is still there in his fatigued countenance (469). Though this expression attracted her to him in their youth (183), it also represents a quality that may suit him better for communal life on spiritual premises than for everyday married life in the world.

In this way, Howells may still be making a value judgment in this story, though a more complex one than Firkins detects. Even if the peaceful angelic life has not necessarily made Roger's mind atrophy, it has still offered a refuge to a man whose poetic and visionary temperament might have made everyday life in the world uncongenial to him. Roger does not appear to be broken in hope or spirit when he comes to the Shakers, and his youth, strength, and education, as well as his rapturous expression, make him especially interesting to them. Elder Fraser had told Howells that the Shakers wanted "cultivated people -- half the subscribers of the Atlantic Monthly -- to come and fill up [their] vacant ranks" ("A Shaker Village" 706), and Chloe reports to Roger that

'[o]ne of the sisters said they wanted educated people to help spread the truth among people from the world outside when they came to meeting; and another said that gone look in your face made her think of prophesying; but I told her it was nothing but mooning, and we got into a perfect gale. But if you did join the Shakers, Roger, I guess they'd pet you up enough, and they wouldn't object to all the poetry you were a mind to make.' (313)

Nevertheless, the story does not tell what particular gifts to be useful the Shakers have found in Roger over the

years. Has he been a schoolmaster here as well as in the world? Has he been called upon to produce occasional odes and obituary verses? Have his accessibility to rapture and his poetic inclinations found form in Shaker hymns? Has he been made a deacon or even a family elder? Does he, like Father Abraham ("A Shaker Village" 705) still work each day at basket-making? What rewards and sacrifices has communal life entailed for him? There is irony in Chloe's effusion that Shakers "'are just like brothers and sisters, and more so than the real ones oftentimes'" (311), recalling Howells's own surprise that the Shakers grieved at their sister's funeral as if bound by the "ties of nature" (702). However, by not recounting Roger's alternative life to balance Chloe's recital, regardless of Roger's own memory lapses, Howells appears to be suggesting that Chloe's life, with all its pain and loss, has been more real than Roger's. Firkins does not explore these dimensions.

Like Firkins, Jones too may be oversimplifying. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Howells's apparent rejection of Shakerism in The Undiscovered Country cannot be attributed solely to the pragmatic issue of progeny. Nor can Chloe's ambivalence be attributed in such large measure to the decline of the familial ideal in an unsettled and rampantly acquisitive society, in which even a happy marriage may work against society's good by focusing the couple's energies too

much in each other. ¹⁵ If Chloe's marriage to Ira Dickerman after her parting from Roger had an anti-social tendency, we hear of it only obliquely in her mention of their move "'out West'" where "'everything seemed to turn into money'" (472); he gave up his law practice and for the last thirty years of his life "didn't do anything but look after his property" and occasionally make loans (472). In the novella's first installment, the young couple on the ride that leads them to the Shakers discuss Ira as a suitor who is "'smart'" and "'practical'" with prospects for being "'very well off'" and even getting into Congress, and therefore more eligible than Roger for Chloe's hand (186).

The story may offer a subtle indictment of a society that rewards Ira's brand of ambition and luck over Roger's "gentle intensity" (183); Ira, in going on to turn everything into money, may have been willing, unlike Ansel Denton, to sacrifice some other people's well-being. From Chloe's account, however, she does not seem to have been involved in these concerns. Whether the meeting in the novella's title takes place in the 1890s, when the story was offered to readers, or in the 1870s, when Howells was amassing his Shaker material, the parting sixty years earlier would be set in the ante-bellum period. Chloe as a young bride at that time would have moved into her own separate sphere of domesticity,

¹⁵ For a consideration of this issue in The Rise of Silas Lapham, see Allen Stein 515.

in which she might not have been expected to ask how her husband made his money.

When Chloe tells Roger about her marriage, she still speaks largely from this sphere. Ira, she affirms, was "very good" to her and she "didn't have anything to complain of" (472); he "was always just so" to her; "I don't know," she says, "as I ever had a thing happen to me that he could have helped" (474). The deaths of their five sons were "what hurt the most," and "it 'most killed him to have them go" (474). Chloe does not say whether Ira looked at her as if he saw her.

In fact, though we hear about Ira in some detail, we never see him; he is never really competition for Roger. Chloe has no particular interest in him as long as she engaged to Roger, and resumes being courted by him only when Roger is lost to her. Nevertheless, Chloe and Ira seem to have cared for each other, looked out for each other's welfare, and shared each other's pain. Though Chloe has not forgotten either Roger's gentle intensity or her own suffering at his change of heart, her life with Ira appears to meet Allen Stein's definition of a "successful marriage" as seen in Howells's fiction: "an unending, basically pragmatic process of mutual accommodation between the partners conveying to each the lesson that the welfare of one is finally indistinguishable from the welfare of the other" (502).

Some of the young Roger's problems with worldly marriage may be based in the failure of many couples to live in this

"mutual accommodation". After his tour of the Shaker village with Elder Lindsley, he leads into his new proposal to Chloe by recalling his own father and mother:

'They thought all the world of each other, but they were always disputing and quarreling; and look around at all the married people! Every house a scene of contention. Will against will, always! Your grandfather and grandmother, who have lived together for fifty years, do they agree? But the Shakers have peace; the kingdom of heaven has come to them on earth.' (315)

Earlier, on the carriage ride that brings the couple to the Shaker village, Roger has told Chloe that he hates "'to have things fade out, and die out, the way they all seem to do,'" and that he "'should like to get something that would last'" (186-187). When he looks at married people, even those who are "'good friends,'" he finds that "'something's gone, and it seems to be their love'" (187).

Chloe's love is more individual. She finds the intense, rapturous, notional Roger more attractive than the practical Ira, but she is not without hope that Roger's notions can be tempered a little. When Roger points out that Chloe's father prefers Ira as a suitor, Chloe answers with some spirit that "'Father can have him yet, if he wants him [but] I don't'" (186). Nevertheless, she adds, But I guess you can be practical enough -- if you want to'" and goes on to say that "'grandfather thinks you might study law while you're teaching; he did. And I don't believe he cares much for writing poetry -- There! I like it!'" (186) She tells Roger

that she could see him, even in his absence, "'as plain'" and "'full as real'" as if he stood before her all the time (185); in the same dialogue she loses patience when he looks at her as if he does not see her (185).

However, each of these lovers has an agenda for the other. Chloe, as we have seen, seeks to bring Roger's attractive intensity into line with the middle-class companionate marriage ideal. When they go on to tour the Shaker Dwelling House, with "more sisters than sufficed to show them through," she sighs and exclaims in "sweet hypocrisy" over the "perfection of all the domestic appointments, apparent to her housekeeping instincts," enjoying the "helpless homage" of the celibate sisters in her own "superabundant joy" at her engaged status (310).

Roger does not find his own version of the companionate ideal until his "vision of the truth" on his private tour with Elder Lindsley (315); this makes him tell Chloe he now sees that "'all we have thought, all we have hoped, from our -- our -- love, is a mistake, a snare, a delusion!'" (315). He tries to woo Chloe to share his own newfound ideal, proclaiming as they are back on the road in the carriage that "'there is another love'" (315). Nevertheless, he feels as bound to her as the "'brothers and sisters there who were once husbands and wives,'" and believes he cannot become a Shaker without her, even for the freedom of the angels (315).

Thus, as we see, Chloe hopes that Roger can become a

practical husband and provider without losing the intensity that makes him attractive to her; Roger hopes that Chloe will join him in the collective mutual accommodation of Shaker life. The sexual element is clearer in her agenda than in his: his arrival at her grandfather's house the previous day has brought her "mingled fright and joy" (184); she falls into "laughing and crying at once" on their carriage ride (187); and she clearly enjoys looking at him, though she discloses this only indirectly (187). But he too enjoys looking at her; he loses control of the horse when trying to kiss her; and their love, we are told, makes them "full of delicious surprises for each other, whether they find they are "alike in a thing, or unlike"(184).

Howells's writing has been accused of sexlessness, and he himself admitted that there are no "'palpitating divans'" in his novels (qtd. in Carter 237). Nevertheless, as Elizabeth Stevens Prioleau claims, Howells could be a "powerful and effective erotic writer" who could use "every conceivable literary device to portray the sexual drama" (xv). By "sexual," Prioleau means "not only genital sexuality, but the whole sensuous/ affective life of man" or woman (xiv). In the parting between Chloe and Roger on the road, Chloe feels that her sexuality has been invalidated by Roger's new proposal. "'It isn't my feelings you've hurt,'" she cries, when he tells her that what they have hoped for from their love is a delusion and a snare (315). The narrator informs us that

"perhaps in these words she meant to express what was otherwise unsayable: the wound to something deeper than feeling, to her womanhood itself, to what was most sacred and helpless in it" (315).

At their meeting sixty years later, she tries to explain:

'It hurt me, Roger, more than a man could ever understand. It made me feel as if I was draggin' you down, and, if I couldn't see it as you did, I was kind of -- well -- low-minded; I don't express it very well now, and I couldn't begin to express it then. But it made it seem as if everything that we had thought so beautiful and lovely was disgraceful, somehow. And all the while I knew, just as well as I know now, that it wa'n't; but I didn't know how to say so; and I felt as if you were putting the whole burden on me; and I couldn't bear it. When I saw that you really meant it, all I wanted was to get you out of my sight.' (473)

At the time she hears his new proposal, and as she has pondered it over the years, she feels that he has invalidated their love by asking her to be a Shaker. What he has said, however, is not that their love itself has been a snare, a mistake, or a delusion; he has said that they have been trapped, ensnared, and deluded in expecting a peaceful kind of happiness from it. Like Elder Lindsley, the Shaker who has conducted him on a private tour, he has not said that marriage is wrong, only that it does not lead to this particular view of heaven.

Remembering Basil March, we may see this story as making another kind of value judgment, not on Shakerism or on marriage but on the role of choices as components but not sole factors in character development. If Chloe and Roger both

have the "making of several characters" in them, and if chance, outside forces, and inner convictions all contribute to the ways people develop as their different "characters" advance or recede, then either one might truly have developed differently but "just as well" in a different course, not because choices ultimately do not matter, but rather because they bring out different characters.

Thus, if Chloe had stayed with Roger and the Shakers, or if he had gone into the world with her as her husband, each would have experienced different trials and different rewards. Different "characters" might have been called forth in both of them, causing them to develop differently. Looking back from old age as a married couple instead of as a Shaker and a visitor, each one might still have questions about the course not taken, whatever that course might have been. To say that one alternative might have worked "just as well" as another, then, is not to minimize the significance of either choice. It is rather to say that each choice, though promoting different developments in Roger and Chloe, would still have been ultimately meaningful, and problematical, in its own way.

The counter-traditional suggestion of this "just as well" ending also helps decenter both the marriage plot and the choice plot that insists on Shakerism or marriage.

Another more subversive decentering element is Elder Lindsley's role in breaking up the couple. This version of the courtship-plot-turned-disengagement-narrative casts him as the

seducer, whose interest inclines toward Roger from the outset. When the couple first arrives at the Shaker village, and Chloe is telling him she used to visit there with her grandfather, the elder speaks kindly to her, but his eyes wander to Roger (308). When the sisters have shown the couple through the dwellings, he addresses his further invitation to Chloe to visit "'the barns, and shops, and gardens'" and see how the Shakers work as well as how they live (311); when Chloe answers, predictably, that she is tired, Elder Lindsley is able to turn the invitation graciously to "'the young man'" (311). He seems to be joking when he tells her that the office sisters "'are great hands for gathering folks in'" and that he must stop and tell them not to try to make a Shaker of her (311). In view of what happens, however, this may be an expression of his true intent. When Chloe and Roger are back in the carriage, she looks fondly at his "dreamy face" and tells him that the sisters all admire him. And, though he is the one with the "gone" look, she is the one who turns prophet when she adds, "'and I guess if they could get hold of you, they wouldn't trouble much about gathering me in!'" (313)

Before taking Roger away to see the rest of the village, the elder reminds the couple not to make the mistake the "'world outside'" often makes about them by thinking they condemn marriage. While they believe that there can be "no angelic life in marriage, but in freedom from marriage the angelic life [can] begin before death as well as after death,"

they "'do not say marriage is wrong'" and they "'know there are many happy marriages, which are entered into from pure affection.'" He tells them he is "'sure we all wish and hope that yours will be so'" (311). Very subtly, seeming to disqualify his right to counsel them, he warns them that the "'love that unites young people cannot keep its promise of happiness'" because it is selfish in origin, seeking love in return. Shakerism, however, is a "'city of refuge from self'" (312). His final reminder not only echoes the sisters quoted in the article, who have had thoughts of homes and children, but also looks ahead to the end of the story:

'You must not think that we are not men and women of like nature with others, and that it has cost us nothing to renounce the Adamic order of life. We have had our thoughts and longings for wife, and husband, and children, and the homes they build. Nay, several among us have known all the happiness that the marriage relation can give, and have voluntarily abandoned it for the gospel relation. ... Marriage is the best thing in the world, but not the best thing out of the world. Few things are more pleasing to us than the sight of a young couple living rightly in their order; and we honor, as much as any one, a father and mother dwelling together at the end of a long life, with their children and grandchildren around them. Only, even in those cases; we remember that marriage is earthly and human, and our gospel relation is divine' (312).

Taking his leave of Roger, the elder reminds him, "'It is something that requires serious reflection. It is not to be decided rashly'" (312). All through their interchanges he has seemed to be disinterested and accommodating. Nevertheless, Howells has established the elder's focus on Roger from the outset and has thus cast all his utterances in an insinuating

light.

This variation on the seduction plot sets one man seducing another man away from a woman; Adam and Eve have come into the Garden from the outside, and the father figure becomes the serpent beguiling the man, creating homosocial if not homosexual implications in our reading of how this engagement is broken off. Roger becomes the "one man involved with a woman and a man" in the kind of triangle relationship schematized by Rene Girard and developed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (130). In this version of the triangle, however, the woman is not the medium of exchange between the men; in fact, the act of seduction, which takes place in the context of "relations of patriarchal power" (Sedgwick 131), works to displace the woman. In an ironic variation on both the seduction plot and the homosocial triangle, however, the male seducer represents sexual denial and the embracing of communalist values rather than selfish individual purposes; he offers Roger a choice of marriage (to Chloe) or family (with the Shakers), rather than a choice of marriage-and-family (in the world's terms) or homosocial freedom from family constraints. At the same time, however, the elder's agenda for Roger as a valuable potential member of the community reminds us of how difficult it can be to separate selfish and unselfish motives in our own thinking. Roger is brought by this seducer, not to knowledge of his own nakedness, but to confirmation of his own suspicions that earthly love does not

necessarily lead to the happiness he has hoped for. His own predilection for a different, other-worldly kind of rapture makes him open to this seduction, and for the choice of a celibate Eden over a marriage made in earth.

The elder's speech also ironically foreshadows Chloe's fate. Though we see her hale and alert at the story's end, with her grandchildren around her after a long life, her husband and five of her seven children are dead. However, unlike Hawthorne's Martha Pierson, she does not follow her earthly lover to the Shakers against her own nature and inclination; nor does she die of an overburdened heart. She suffers, makes her suffering known, and survives.

Though she is more passionate and mercurial than Peace Hughes in The World of Chance, Chloe too embodies many of the changing images of women that were appearing in the late nineteenth-century art and fiction. She may not be as "inscrutable" as Daisy Miller, but, like Henry James's heroine, she is a "combination of audacity and innocence" (83; qtd. Banner, American Beauty 84). The first details we hear of Chloe establish her independence. Since her mother's death, we are told, she has been "head of the household" for her father, a doctor (184). On a visit to her grandparents' house, she entertains Roger, apparently without chaperonage, until eleven o'clock at night and drives him herself to the tavern where he is accommodated (184). When she realizes the import of his new proposal, she expresses her conflicts and emotions

openly and with spirit:

'Do you expect me to argue with you, Roger? To tell you that I wish to be your wife, if you don't wish to be my husband? ... No, thank you, Roger! I won't be a stumbling-block to you, and I would sooner die than -- I don't blame you; and I want you should go back to the Shakers. Yes, I do! Right now! ... And now, if you have a grain of pity in you, you'll get out, and let me go home alone. I can find the way, if you're not here to blind me!' (315)

When he prepares to get down from the carriage, as she has told him to do, she has a momentary lapse: "'Roger, Roger! Are you really going to leave me?'" (315) Nevertheless, rather than let him accompany her back to her grandfather's house and explain his version of the situation, she catches the reins "fiercely" from him:

'No! I will tell them; I will explain! And I will go down on my knees to them in shame. Yes, they were right about you, Roger Burton, and I was the simpleton -- to believe in you, to trust you. Oh, I am punished! Are you staying here because you think I will change? If you stay, I will get out myself, and walk to grandfather's.' (316)

He dismounts, still offering to follow her. She, however, drives off, mixing recrimination and forgiveness in her moans and cries, leaving him standing in the road.

Chloe demonstrates her independence again in their reunion, when she gives Roger her account of her marriage to Ira. We may gather that she was a companion to her husband -- a trait that, according to Lois Banner, also helps characterize the nineteenth-century New Woman (159); she appears to have been a support to him through sorrow and loss, and in his own last illness. In addition, she tells Roger that

Ira died in '56; if the reunion in the story takes place in the 1870s, she has been a widow for nearly twenty years, and for much longer if the time of the story is the same decade when it was published. The fact that she has not remarried offers added evidence of an independent spirit.

Firkins and Jones both detect Howells's ambivalence toward Shakerism in this story, especially when Shakerism is contrasted to an outside world that has lost hold of the familial ideal. However, as we have seen, this contrast is less explicit in this novella than in The Undiscovered Country or The World of Chance. Chloe suffers more in her marriage from the deaths of her own children and husband than from the larger malaise of late nineteenth-century America. The ambivalence here stems less from the question of what has happened to the family than from the larger, more disquieting question of how a family is defined.

We see, then, that the ambivalence which Firkins and Jones recognize in Chloe, Roger, and Howells in this story may actually stem from the fact that the working definition of a "successful marriage" which these critics attribute to Howells is a good description of Shakerism as well. Day-to-day communalist living requires an ongoing "mutual accommodation" and a sense of shared commitment to mutual welfare, on a scale that goes beyond the loving couple. In addition, though Shakers were indeed troubled by internal frictions and declining numbers in the latter half of the nineteenth

century, their communities were still spheres of order and civility, especially when contemplated by visitors, writers, and readers from an increasingly "chaotic and threatening" outside world. While Howells is again appropriating Shaker life in this fiction to comment on worldly conditions, the alternatives his lovers choose and then question in this particular tale are not as different as they might first appear.

This resemblance of Shakerism to marriage, as a working out of the concept of complicity and the familial ideal, and as a refuge from self as well as from the world, is more potentially troubling than the contrast between sexual and celibate life. As we remember, Howells had closed the article with a speculation as to whether the Shaker order or the Adamic order -- as represented by the fashionable mother and baby -- was necessarily right or wrong; Roger insists to Chloe, before she sets him down from the carriage, that since a "'thing cannot be blameless and yet be an error,'" the Shakers "'are right, or they are wrong'" (314). This tale, however, may be asking us to reconsider the idea of "dialectical necessity" which Jones finds essential to all of Howells's Shaker fictions -- the idea that Shaker life and worldly life must be held up in necessary contrast to each other. When this contrast breaks down, the question of whether either Roger or Chloe might have done "about as well" in the course not taken assumes a more sobering cast.

Besides calling "dialectical necessity" into question, A Parting and a Meeting disrupts the expected progression of the marriage narrative. It starts with an engagement rather than ending with one. It also makes the man's seducer another man, who offers stability and peace as alternatives to marriage rather than as gains to be achieved through it.

And, besides this problematizing of the seduction plot, the story extends the possibilities of love fiction by following its couple into old age and inviting speculation on whether they have been "separately happy ever after," as well as on whether they could have lived happily ever after in a more traditional denouement. It questions the necessary validity of one choice ruling out another, while it creates a complex tension between peace, happiness, and authenticity -- entities that are not usually construed in opposition. Thus, as a narrative of disengagement, A Parting and a Meeting breaks down the conventional courtship, seduction, and Shaker-choice plots; at the same time, it subverts the dialectical impulse that often drives these plot conventions.

In The Day of Their Wedding, Howells once again begins a story with an engaged couple and proceeds to disengage them. Lorenzo Weaver and Althea Brown have left the Shakers at Harshire (twin community to Vardley) to be married. Lorenzo has got back the property he had given to the community and has left a few days before Althea. He has found a flat for them to live in, and he will be going into a partnership in

the drug business in the world, using the knowledge he has gained in the Shaker seed shop. He has a new haircut, a new suit of clothes, and a hundred-dollar advance from his new business partner in his pocket when he joins Althea on the train at Fitchburg. She has left the Shakers in secret, with the help of a sympathetic friend who has lent her a more worldly hat to replace her Shaker bonnet, and they travel on to Saratoga, where they will not need a license to marry.

The story takes place in one day, and it follows the couple into and around the resort town in summer. They are puzzled that the train porter and the waiters lose interest in serving them, until they are advised about tipping; they find that Lorenzo's money goes quickly on new clothes for Althea; they ponder the number of lies they are telling in ordinary interchanges; they find a minister who counsels them kindly on marriage and go away to think further on their decision; Althea hears more confidences than she wishes from an effusive bride they meet at an outdoor concert; they return to the minister and go through the marriage ceremony, answering with the Shaker "'Yee'" instead of "Yes" out of habit; and throughout the day they ask themselves and each other what being married really means. At the end of the day, Althea determines that she is going back to the Shakers. She tells Lorenzo that what the Shaker Family has taught her about the heavenly and the earthly order, "'whether it was right or whether it was wrong, whether it was true or whether it was

false,' " is "'too strong'" for her now and will be "'too strong'" as long as she lives (153). Not wanting to remain in the earthly order without Althea, Lorenzo agrees to return too, and the story ends as they hurry together to catch their train.

Firkins calls The Day of Their Wedding a "small affair" but goes on to say that "a heartbreak is not clamorous for space"(95). He finds both drama and tragedy in the couple's disengaging, when the "hold of that inexorable past" at last "reasserts itself in the hour of love's triumph, and draws the couple back to the life which has become imbedded in instincts deeper than their mutual attraction" (95). Still, though he finds the "culmination" -- -- the "kiss which seals the parting, not the meeting" -- to be "delicately imagined" and artistically satisfying, he nonetheless tells us he does "not admire the general conduct of this ungroomed and formless story"(95). He considers it a defect in the story that the "day's events seem to emulate the shuffle one can so readily imagine in the gait and mental process of the characters"(95). He also considers it a defect that the

buzz of worldly incident, the florid purchases, the cabman's troubling recrudescence, the tawdry acquaintance of the hotel, affect one with a dissonance which the talks with the gracious minister in the rest and coolness of the shuttered house cannot wholly countervail (95).

Firkins thus finds the style of this story to have "an untidiness which in a point-device writer like Mr. Howells reminds one of the studied disarray of an Elizabethan

lover" (95).

However, this supposed untidiness connects The Day of Their Wedding to an earlier Howells novel, Their Wedding Journey, published in 1872, which introduces Basil and Isabel March to the reading public. Firkins calls Their Wedding Journey "the plotless and actionless recital of the mild experiences and pungent observations of a newly married couple" (76). The Day of Their Wedding recites the experiences and observations of an engaged couple who become newlyweds in its pages; in finding the later fiction deficient in plot and action, Firkins actually links it structurally with Howells's earlier treatment of the newlywed theme.

With this connection in mind, we may look at The Day of Their Wedding as a fiction that subverts the courtship and wedlock plot by deconstructing the honeymoon. It takes place in Saratoga, a town which had gained a reputation as a honeymoon resort, but it exposes the commercialism and materialism rampant in this supposed love nest and asks us, as readers, to reconsider the significance of an entire honeymoon culture. It offers a worldly bride in the person of the young Mrs. Cargate, who assumes an immediate intimacy with Althea, but it shows her as a vapid spendthrift who praises her husband for leaving her in a hotel on their honeymoon when a lucrative business prospect calls him away, and for thoughtfully bringing her mother to the hotel to keep her company in his absence. And it ends as the young newlyweds who

have gained our interest and sympathy decide to return to a life in which they may actually be "separately happy ever after," without consummating their love beyond a parting kiss.

Thus, Howells may be bringing the same ambling, episodic plot structure of Their Wedding Journey to The Day of Their Wedding in order to re-establish the newlywed theme with a new irony. If this is so, the resemblances between these two fictions -- their shared honeymoon theme and even their common formlessness (accepting Firkins's estimate) -- may help us see that in The Day of Their Wedding, Howells is rewriting not only the wedding journey tradition but also the generic happily-ever-after plots by which novelists continually force "the matrimony of others" upon our attention. The experiences of Althea and Lorenzo on their version of the wedding journey -- which for them is that portion of the life journey that moves through marriage and beyond it -- are not "mild" but profoundly disturbing, to them and to us; their "pungent" observations invite us to troubling reflections on what marriage has come to mean. Therefore, what Firkins calls "dissonance" and "disarray" in the narrative construction of this Shaker fiction may actually be the necessary consequence of bringing Shakerism to bear upon both the honeymoon mindset and the novelistic enterprise.

The honeymoon as a cultural practice was still relatively new in the 1870s, the decade when Howells was regaling his readers with travels of the young March couple through Niagara

¹⁶, Montreal, and Quebec, and also when he was beginning to know the Shakers. Social historian Ellen Rothman observes that in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a newly married couple would customarily make a tour of the homes of friends and relatives, sometimes accompanied by another couple. This journey would reintroduce the two individuals into their extended family and social circles as a couple, thus "affirming communal ties" in the context of their new relationship to each other (175). Basil and Isabel, traveling alone together and immersed in "hiding their mutual interest resolutely from their fellow pilgrims" (Firkins 76), are seeking to participate in a new version of the wedding journey, exchanging what Mrs. Ward's 1878 manual Sensible Etiquette called the "harassing bridal tour" and for "a honeymoon of repose, exempted from the claims of society" (qtd. in Rothman 175).

By the 1890s, Rothman continues, the "bridal tour" had completely lost its earlier "communal basis"; no longer "an affirmation of community and family ties," it "had become a rite of initiation for the couple as a self-contained, sexually complete unit" (280). By this time, Rothman notes, increased use of contraception and a wider range of career opportunities for women, married and unmarried, was making

¹⁶ John Sears discusses Niagara Falls as a tourist site; he also discusses the Connecticut and Hudson River valleys, and "Prisons, Asylums, Cemeteries, and Parks."

marriage appear "a less fearsome prospect than it had for most of the past hundred years" (282). However, though The Day of Their Wedding appeared in 1896, the Shaker associations which inspired it date back to the 1870s. Over the two intervening decades, the atmosphere we find in the story, of heightened sexual interest linked with intensified consumerism, had been generated around the custom of the marriage journey.

The choice of Saratoga for a setting gains a particular interest when we consider an actual event that might have suggested it the story. In June 1871 Brother Ira Lawson, a thirty-seven-year-old trustee, and twenty-five-year-old Sister Eliza Van Valen left the Hancock Shaker community in secret to marry, going by train not to Saratoga but to Albany. They took a local Methodist minister with them, who began to conduct the wedding service in a parlor of an elegant hotel. Lawson, however, interrupted the ceremony, and, according to reports, later said,

I was conscience-stricken. I was terrified. I was speechless for a while. Right then and there in the parlor of that wonderful hotel, I decided to go no further in the path of wickedness and sin to which I had been so unwisely led by the tempter. I knew the marriage could not be undone, but it could remain unconsummated, and I determined it should be. (qtd in Brewer 186)

They returned to the community after being married for less than twenty-four hours and were allowed to rejoin. Brewer speculates that Lawson was granted another "privilege" because his business talents had resulted in wise investments and increased assets for the community (186). He resumed his

duties as trustee, and was later promoted to the Ministry. Eliza left again a year later and did not return; Lawson died in 1905.

If Howells knew this story, the change of setting from Albany to Saratoga heightens the sexual tension he might have seen implicit in the situation. Certainly the sexual-initiation aspect of the honeymoon would have been on the minds of this story's first readers. By the 1870s, marriage manuals were both reflecting and promoting the often-daunting significance of the wedding night, which, as Charles Rosenberg notes, was "an institutionalized trauma for the pure of both sexes" (140). In 1871, for example, George Naphey's widely-read text The Physical Life of Woman: Advice to the Maiden, Wife, and Mother stated that the "initiation into marriage" is necessarily accompanied by "more or less suffering" (70; qtd. in Rothman 281). Eliza Bisbee Duffy's What Women Should Know: A Woman's Book About Women, counseled readers in 1873 that "the consummation of marriage is frequently attended with inconvenience, and even with physical prostration" (101; qtd. in Rothman 281). Such advice, no doubt intended to encourage patience and understanding, must have sent mixed messages to young couples, and especially to young brides, as they found themselves relying more on books and less on family and friends to accompany them into the married state.

With these changes in honeymoon practice, a young couple's first intimate experience of each other, including

the heavily invested wedding night, often became connected with the business of tourism. This meant that the beginning of married life would often be associated with excursions to points of scenic and historic interest such as Niagara Falls, or to cities such as New York and Cincinnati with their own kind of spectator interest for visitors from out-of-town.

In this capacity, it is worth noting that many popular honeymoon spots happened by coincidence to become located near Shaker villages. Sabbathday Lake is near Poland Spring in Maine; Canterbury and particularly Enfield in New Hampshire would be easily accessible to tourists in the White Mountains; Hancock, Massachusetts, and Mount Lebanon, New York, are also not far from Saratoga. It would be customary, especially in the latter half of the nineteenth century, for a middle-class couple on their honeymoon, intensely absorbed in each other and in their new relationship, to venture out from their hotel on an excursion to a neighboring Shaker community. They might even take back an oval box or a bottle of rosewater, or some other high-quality household item, as a souvenir. Such an excursion brings two ways of life together: stylish young couples in transit, representing newly consummated marital love, and including the Shakers in their sightseeing and shopping, are brought into contact with celibate sisters and brothers at home, in their enduring buildings and unchanging fashions of dress, enacting their time-honored rituals of work and worship.

In The Day of Their Wedding, however, we see this excursion in reverse. A young Shaker woman and man in love with each other make a foray into the hectic, materialistic, transitory world of late nineteenth-century honeymoon culture. Their development, as Basil March would call it, is figured in their decision that this world, and the larger world it represents, are not for them. This decision guides their further development as they turn back to reaffirm communal ties with their old Shaker home and Shaker Family. The Shakers have become the tourists now, and after their own day of sightseeing and shopping in the acquisitive, sex-oriented cultural mainstream, they return to the Shaker village, just as a visiting honeymoon couple would return from a visit among the Shakers to the busy splendor and self-consciously romantic isolation of their hotel. When the story of Althea and Lorenzo bypasses sexuality as essential to a loving union and material gain as essential to happiness, it rewrites both the honeymoon plot and the larger life-as-journey-together metaphor, in life and in narrative fiction. The young bride Mrs. Cargate's extended recital to Althea provides ample evidence for Basil March's contention that the novelists control our expectations of marriage. Using her watch-case with her husband's picture to illustrate -- "'It's taken right on the case; they do that now, and it's so much nicer than pasting in a photograph'" -- she tells the story of her romance:

'George gave it [the watch-case] to me before we were married. Well, he had to hurry up; we didn't have a very long courtship. We got acquainted on the cars, and he said the minute he set eyes on me he knew I was the girl he was going to marry. It was a perfect novel from beginning to end; and I don't care what they say, but I know that the course of true love does run smooth, sometimes. It didn't have a single hitch with us; but I didn't suppose we should be separated this way, right in the first week of our honeymoon. George says it's good practice, though; he's got to be on the road so much; and I've got to be left with mamma, and I might as well begin early; I've almost talked her to death about him already.' (106-107)

Later, Althea repeats some of this "perfect novel" to Lorenzo. Mrs. Cargate, she recounts, "'was engaged three times before she got married,'" and "'says it's nothing to be engaged'" (134). Althea's compulsion to retell the story, and Lorenzo's squeamishness on hearing it, are conveyed in this dialogue:

'She says that her husband says he first felt foolish about her when he saw her through the car-window eating candy and carrying on, as she calls it, with some other girls; and it was her regular teeth, and red lips when she was eating, that made him feel so.'

'It's kind of -- sickish,' said Lorenzo.

'He came into the car, and he made an excuse to sit down by her when the other girls left, and she let him have a chance to squeeze her hand -- he didn't know that she let him --'

'Don't, Althea!'

'And before she got out they were as good as engaged; she was dead in love with him, she says, from the first look, and he sent her his picture as soon as he got to New York.' (134-135)

Mrs. Cargate's account of her three previous engagements includes the reasons "'just why she fell in love with each one, and what each one said he fell in love with her for'"

(135). Althea hears the recitation of this novel with an increasing sense of guilt over the reasons she and Lorenzo were first attracted to each other. "'From all that I can make out,'" she says, the Cargates

'fell in love with each other for the same things, or just about the same, as we got foolish about each other for. He thought she was handsome, and she thought he was handsome. Lorenzo, they fell in love with each other's looks!' (136)

Althea's dismay leads her to question the course of her own love still further. "'Try to think back -- far back, Lorenzo,'" she begs,

and see if there was not something different in your mind that made you foolish about me before you noticed that I was -- sightly. See if you didn't think I was bright first. I shouldn't want them to say in the Family that we were taken with each other's looks.' (138)

Lorenzo's honesty forces him to admit that it was the looks first and that it "'was afterwards that I thought you was smart'" (138). Althea weeps briefly, but dries her eyes. Lorenzo's further contemplations lead him to say more confidently,

'The way I think we had ought to look at it is this: It's the body that contains the soul, and the body is outside of the soul, and it comes first, and it has a right to, as long as it's outside the soul. It can't help it, and the soul can't help it. But I believe we shall find each other in the soul more and more.' (139)

These words could be prophetic in two ways. Lorenzo intends them to mean that as he and Althea grow closer to each other through a marriage relation that includes the body, they will recognize each other's souls more fully. This would be

the conventional marriage plot, moving from love-at-first-sight, to a wedding, and on through a fulfilling sexual and domestic relationship to a deeper mutual recognition which transcends, outlasts, and reaffirms the initial physical attraction. A perfect novel, even in Mrs. Cargate's terms, might imply this progression in a conventional happily-ever-after denouement, though it is hard to imagine such a future for her marriage to George, given her superficial character, the hectic nature of their wooing (begun in the transitory setting of a railroad car, a moving space away from home where people can indulge their appetites for sweets, novels, and looking at each other), and the frantically acquisitive impulses Howells continues to attribute to the age in which they live.

The actual outcome for Lorenzo and Althea, however, invites a different reading of these words he speaks to her. As celibate brother and sister back in their old Shaker home, living and working in their separate spheres and seeing and speaking to each other only in structured situations, they may indeed "'find each other in the soul more and more.'" However, in their progression to this state of awareness of each other they will bypass the marital sexuality and domesticity that Lorenzo sees before them when he says these words. Their perfect novel may thus have a similar ending to a courtship plot, but it will reach that ending by a disturbingly different way.

Althea does not foresee this outcome when she resolves to return to the Shaker Family. "'I don't blame the earthly order,'" she says to Lorenzo, when she has once again put on her Shaker dress and bonnet (152). But even if marriage "'isn't a sin for the world'," since the world "'hasn't the same light'" as theirs, she believes that in choosing the earthly order she and Lorenzo "'should be shutting [their] eyes to the light!'" (154) She agrees to remain with Lorenzo if he can ask her to do so. "'I'm nothing!'" she cries. "'What do I care for myself? It's only the truth I care for, and the light! But if you say so, Lorenzo, the light of the world shall be my light, the darkness shall be my light!'" (155)

Lorenzo cannot ask this of her. "'Do you think,'" he says, "'that I could be anyways comfortable knowin' that you wanted to live the angelic life, and I was draggin' you down to the earthly?'" (152) "'The angelic life wouldn't be anything without you, Lorenzo,'" she says "tenderly, but with a confusion of purpose which was not, perhaps, apparent even to herself" (155). The narrator is allowing us, as worldly readers, to surmise that some kind of reverse-flirting may be going on here; Althea's motives are no more simple or clear than a worldly bride's would be at this juncture, with so much of her future at stake.

"'Nor the earthly order without you,'" Lorenzo answers, "solemnly," adding with "that mixture of commonplace which was

an element in his nature":

'I presume, if I wanted to stay in the world-outside, I could get a divorce easy enough; but if I can't have you, I don't want to stay. If you can't feel that it's right for you to live in the earthly order, I know it can't be right for me either. We can do like so many of them have done: we can go back to the Family, and live there separate. It will be a cross, but it won't be any more of a cross for us than it is for the others that have separated; and maybe -- maybe we ought to bear a cross.' (155-56)

After a last kiss, which Althea tells Lorenzo should be "'because I let you,'" so that he would not have to "'bear the blame'" alone, and in which their heads are "both hidden in her Shaker bonnet" (157), they leave their hotel for the train which will take them on the last stage of their wedding journey. The same recrudescient cabman (Firkins 95) who has driven them to and from the minister's house where they were married, sees them heading past him and, though they do not look up at his greeting, he remains "staring at them over his shoulder" until they are "lost to sight at the corner turning to the station" (158). A bustling railroad station in a honeymoon resort town has become for them a station of the cross they have dropped on their journey and chosen, together, to take up again.

As noted above, by telling us that Althea is not fully aware of her own confusion of purpose, Howells is recognizing that even this taking up of a cross is not a wholly self-effacing act. Althea wants the angelic life back, but she wants Lorenzo back in it too. Their choice to live together

separately is thus both a taking and a giving up, and the complexity of the choice does involve a measure of selfishness. The distinction Allen Stein notes between an ideal marriage of "affectionate comradeship" --the term is from Howells's 1901 novel, A Pair of Patient Lovers (503n) -- and "one of passion" which Howells, according to Stein, "regards as having self-gratification as its goal" (503) is not always clear or simple. However, The Day of Their Wedding is improved by this acknowledgement that even the impulse toward comradeship may have an element of self-seeking. This acknowledgement could also imply a recognition that a communalist celibate choice over a private conjugal one is a gain as well as a loss.

Of course, it is possible to read the couple's decision to return to the Shakers as motivated by a fear of adult sexual love. This is Elizabeth Stevens Prioleau's use of the term when she calls The Day of Their Wedding an "anti-marriage story" (127). Prioleau claims that Althea and Lorenzo are "so repulsed by the carnal, material bases of sexuality, that they decide to cancel their wedding" and return to their celibate lives "with relief" (127); Lorenzo's words that the body "'contains the soul'" and rightly "'comes first'" (Day of Their Wedding 139) serve Prioleau as evidence that the lovers "realize the carnal essence of love" even though they "cannot act on this insight" (130). Thus, like earlier critics of this story, Prioleau insists on seeing something inauthentic and

even dysfunctional in the choice these lovers make. James W. Mathews, for example, locates the couple's rejection of worldly conjugal life in Althea's "confusion about the nature of love" and Lorenzo's sense that Althea's "extravagant visions of 'angelic' love will never be modified into the realism of accepting the earthly as good" (Mathews 219; cited in Jones 92). Had Howells based his characters more closely on Ira Lawson and Eliza Van Valen (assuming he knew of the incident), this fear of adult sexual love would be easier to ascribe; Lawson, at thirty-seven, had been with the Shakers since the age of eighteen, nearly half his life. Howells makes a different kind of statement, however, by having the couple both young, and by having Althea initiate their return.

Joel M. Jones challenges Mathews and other critics who take this stand by asking, on Howells's part, "why Althea should accept the 'earthly as good,'" particularly when her "introduction to the earthly modes of social relationship" is embodied in the "shallow, self-centered, supercilious, materialistic" Mrs. Cargate (93). Nevertheless, Jones too betrays a bias for the world. "In contrast," he writes (emphasis mine),

to the affirmative union of Egeria and Ford with which Howells concludes The Undiscovered Country, [the] negative resolution of The Day of Their Wedding demonstrates a basic alteration in his attitude both toward the Shakers and the moral climate of his contemporary culture. Employing the familial ideal as a criterion for judgment, Howells now suggests that the 'angelic life' of the Shakers is nearly as worthy, nearly as real --with regard to spiritual value -- as the mercenary,

increasingly illusory 'world outside.' (94)

However, the plot "resolution" that takes Althea and Lorenzo back to what Jones calls "their life of separation in the Shaker Family" is "negative" only if a union must be conjugal and worldly to be "affirmative". Though Jones admits that the 'world outside' is portrayed in this story as "increasingly illusory," he seems to find that this outside world which the couple rejects is still more real than Shaker life. Jones's observations in his 1982 article appeared a year before Prioleau's book. While Jones focuses, appropriately and meaningfully, on Howells's use of Shakerism as a means of commenting on the loss of the familial ideal in mainstream American culture, he would probably have found support from Prioleau for his assumption that Shakerism cannot, after all, be a valid substitute for the world, however flawed that world's present familial sense may be.

Firkins manages to steer clear of this bias. He identifies Shakerism with the young lovers' "inexorable past" which "reasserts itself in the hour of love's triumph, and draws the couple back to the life which has become imbedded in instincts deeper than their mutual attraction" (93). He does not go so far as to suggest that the world's people's sexual instincts, supposedly leading to mutual attractions, might also have been imbedded rather than necessarily inborn; still, his reading of this story leaves room for this possibility. It would no doubt surprise him to find that he may have

anticipated Judith Butler's positing of the "constructed character of sex and gender" (Butler 32) on which this attraction is supposedly based. Nevertheless, Firkins might be the twentieth-century critic who could most readily see along with Basil March that of the "several characters" within both Althea and Lorenzo, those of Shaker sister and brother in gospel union are the ones that assume the "lead" over the potential earthly wife and husband.

Jones cites the speech of the minister who marries Althea and Lorenzo and tells them that the "highest meaning" of marriage is "the giving up of the self" (qtd. in Jones 93), adding in a note that "One strongly suspects that this ideal of marriage was Howells's own," but that "Howells repeatedly reminds us ... that this image stands as an ideal, applicable only on those occasion when the institution of marriage succeeds" (99n). Allen F. Stein calls The Day of Their Wedding a "minor novella" (502) but sees the minister's speech as "perhaps the most explicit characterization of marriage in all of Howells's work" (502). The minister has the opportunity to expound on this theme to Althea and Lorenzo because his wife, who is to witness their wedding, is taking a considerable time to change her dress for the event. "'The husband and wife,'" he tells them,

'lay down their separate lives, and take up a joint life, which, if they are truly married, shall be theirs forever. There is no marrying after death, but heaven is imaged in every true marriage on earth; for heaven is nothing but the joy of self-giving, and marriage is the supreme self-

giving. We call the ceremony "getting married," ... but the living together, the adjustment of temperaments, the compromise of opinions, the reconciliation of tastes, is what we should call "getting married." (86-87)

With an irony he does not see, the minister fails to recognize that he is also describing Shakerism in this call to adjust, to compromise, to reconcile. "'If you do not give up yourselves,'" he goes on,

'if you insist upon what you think your rights against one another, you will be yokemates of perdition, and your marriage will be a hell. I suppose it is dread of something like this in marriage that has created the celibate sects in all times and in all religions. But marriage is properly the death of the individual, and in its resurrection you will rise not as man and woman, but as one pair, in the unity of immortal love.' (87)

Such various critics as Firkins, Mathews, Stein, Jones, and Prioleau -- even those who cite this speech to support their claims -- do not see that in returning to Shakerism, Althea and Lorenzo are not only going back to the familial ideal but also achieving a kind of marriage. They are dying as individuals, on the cross and journey of their own choosing, to be resurrected not simply as a pair, but as a pair reunited to a larger family -- the goal of the wedding journey in pre-honeymoon days. It is ironic, but not necessarily tragic, that these lovers are ultimately united through their shared act of renouncing each other in worldly terms. Prioleau attributes The Day of Their Wedding to Howells's "sex weariness" and cites an 1892 letter in which he wrote, "I doubt if I shall ever write another story in which mating and marrying plays an

important part. I am too old for it, and it does not interest me" (qtd. 14). The phrase "too old" can of course be read to mean that Howells no longer felt equal to this topic. However, it could also affirm that Howells's continuing interest in marriage had progressed beyond the usual ending. Presaging the critical studies of Boone and DuPlessis, he is writing beyond the mating and 'getting married' stages. He may be doing this precisely because those aspects of marriage that promote and reflect what Allen Stein calls "a pervasive sense of complicity" in a whole society had by now become more engaging to him as material for fiction.

Just as The Day of Their Wedding cannot be called unequivocally anti-marriage when such a personage as Mrs. Cargate is offered to represent what marriage has become, it cannot be called anti-Shaker simply because the choice the young Shaker lovers make appears tragic to some critics and readers. There are moments in the presentation of Althea and Lorenzo in which they Howells seems to hark back to his early sense of the Shakers' "lovable quaintness". Even in her new worldly dress and hat, Althea's appearance prompts an elderly couple at a neighboring table in a restaurant to compare her to a nun and an angel (63). Lorenzo is mystified by worldly tipping practice in a series of encounters with a porter (31), a dining-car waiter (36-37), and a hotel waiter (122). He faces a similar quandary over signing the hotel register, finally taking his cue from another guest and writing "Lorenzo

Weaver and Lady" and feeling he has been scrupulously honest. "If Althea was not his wife," he reasons, "she was certainly, in the parlance of the world-outside, a lady, and this seemed a safe way out of the trouble" (110). We may wonder here if these incidents might somewhat justify the Manifesto's earlier accusation in its review of The Undiscovered Country. Is Howells presenting the Shakers in "a ridiculous light before the world" by showing them unacquainted with tipping or with the connotation of "and lady" on a hotel register, or by making a sister an object of contemplation over a tourist couple's "half-eaten ices" (62). However, the worldly Mrs. Cargate must say "'George says'" three times in the course of her explanation of tipping procedures; Althea is a lady in her manners, bearing, and integrity; and the gracious elderly couple, whom Althea calls "'nice-appearing'", are also objects of interest to the young lovers, perhaps as future projections of themselves in the married state. The Shakers are being watched here, and sometimes being found odd or quaint, both from the story's world of other characters, and from the off-the-page world of readers and critics. Nonetheless, the Shakers are contemplating those other characters as well as being contemplated by them.

This hotel register incident is one instance in which Lorenzo thinks he is telling the truth when in fact he is creating a wrong impression. Throughout the story, however, the couple find themselves telling lies. Althea lies to a

kindly gentleman on the train about where she is from and who is meeting her (11); she and Lorenzo allow a hat saleswoman, and later Mrs. Cargate, to think that Althea's short hair was cut due to fever rather than Shaker custom (46, 121); and when the cab driver, seeking their business, asks them if they are Shakers from Lebanon, Lorenzo answers "'Nay'" and is chastised by Althea for not specifying that they are indeed Shakers, though not from Lebanon. Althea urges Lorenzo to explain, and he does: "'I don't want to tell a lie any more than you do,'" he assures her (66). Althea observes wistfully that they "'seem to tell lies whenever folks speak'" to them now (47).

In the same way that they worry about telling lies, they also struggle to comprehend the true meaning of being married. Mrs. Cargate, thinking the couple already married, is momentarily confused by their different last names until she supplies her own gleeful explanation: "'You forgot you were married,'" she crows to Althea,

'and you told me your maiden name. Oh, that is too good! When I tell George about this! But it isn't the least bit surprising. I've been married nearly a whole week, and I believe if I didn't keep saying my married name to myself all the time, I shouldn't realize yet that I was married. But the only way is to keep saying it; and I write it too: Mrs. George Cargate, Mrs. George Cargate. If you don't do it, you'll get into all sorts of scrapes.' (114)

Earlier in the story, when Lorenzo and Althea are still on the train to Saratoga, he reminds her that in getting married they are doing what they "'have a perfect right to do, and what everybody in the world-outside does'" (12). The

usual worldly concern about the certainty of a union appears when the minister, not yet knowing the couple's Shaker history, says, "'I needn't ask if you have either of you been married before or are now married?'" (75) Althea seems not to understand the minister's relief at Lorenzo's assurance that they are only in hurry to marry to "'save feelin'" (73) -- the same reason Althea left the Shakers in secret (12) -- and that they have "'no need to do it'" (73). As we have seen, the minister's definition of what it means to be married -- the giving up of the self" in the "'living together, the adjustment of temperaments, the compromise of opinions, the reconciliation of tastes'" (87), can also apply to what it means be in gospel union. We have seen Althea's dismay at Mrs. Cargate's assurance that "'it's nothing to be engaged'" (134) and Lorenzo's anxiety over whether he can truthfully write "and Wife" in the hotel register (110). When the wedding has finally taken place, the minister hands the certificate to Althea with the observation, "'I don't know why we always make the ladies the custodians of these things, but we do. I think myself it's often quite as important for the husband to know that he is married'" (144). Althea is surprised and subdued when she finds that there is not "'something more'" to the ceremony on which so much has seemed to depend.

If the ceremony they have gone through is indeed "meaningless," as Jones has called it (94), it is not because

the union Althea and Lorenzo have sought to define for themselves, and which has now been witnessed and certified in the world's terms, remains unconsummated. It is rather because in the sense of what it is to be married, according to the claims of this story, Lorenzo and Althea are already united in a way that the world's ceremonies and documents cannot make more real.

Before the ceremony, we have been given a somewhat bucolic picture of this union in its Shaker setting. Sitting under the trees after the outdoor concert, Lorenzo says, "in a smiling muse":

'I was just thinkin' ...how this light lays along the slope of the upper pasture at the Family. Strikes over the top of the hill and slants along down; and it gets to be evening there, I guess, as much as an hour before it does in the lower pasture and the garden. ... I can see how it looks as plain as if I was there now. Rufus is comin' up the cow-path to look after the cows and drive 'em down to the barn; and I can see Elder Thomas there, waitin' with the boys to see 'em milk, and show 'em. It's just about the time your school lets out, and you're walkin' over to the Church Family house, and the children -- Well, it's kind of peaceful there! And it's sightly. It's full as sightly here, I guess, and now the band's stopped it's peaceful too. ... But I like that upper pasture. I guess the thrushes are beginning to tune up about now in the wood-lot there. I shan't forget how you used to look comin' up by the wall, kind of bendin' forward, with the little girls in the afternoons, a little later on --' (130-131)

Althea turns this conversation to the question of when and how Lorenzo fell in love with her. This shift in the purport of the dialogue may signal, and comment on, the disruptive effect of introducing personalized sexual love into a communal family

setting. Except for sexual love, all the elements of a family are present in this speech and in this setting: provisions for food (the pasture, the milking); warmth (the wood-lot); shelter (the Church Family house); continuity (the children); nurturing (the Elder supervising the boys' milking, Althea guiding and teaching the girls); work (the allotted chores); refuge in old age (the Elder); and peace at the end of the day.

The pastoral quality of this scene is resituated on earth in the story's only other passage that refers to daily life in the Shaker community. After the ceremony, the minister is intrigued to learn from Lorenzo that the Trustees handle all the Shakers' money matters and that Lorenzo has "never had a cent in [his] hands" before leaving the Family. Exclaiming that the Shakers are "'of the resurrection, indeed'" (146), the minister asks if the Family would admit him (147). Lorenzo "gravely" answers, "'Oh, yee,'" but adds, "'You would have to separate, and give up your children'" (147). "'Ah, that isn't so simple,'" the minister replies (147), and we remember that his wife, on coming in to witness the ceremony, had looked at Althea with "a certain dislike or defiance," as at "a stranger whom one has heard prejudicial things of" (142); we also remember the narrator's note that "if the minister had told her of Althea's misgivings it might well have incensed a wife and mother" (142).

The minister goes on to say that giving up wife and

children "'requires reflection,'" but he is attracted by "'a condition where the curse of money is taken away!'" (147). He asks Lorenzo, "'What is the name of your family: Eden? Paradise? Golden Age?'" and Lorenzo replies seriously, "'Nay, ... we came from Harshire'" (147). In this simple line, bringing Eden down to earth, Lorenzo points out that an ideal is realizable, in a nameable place not that far away. At the same time, the past tense of the statement not only shows that this ideal is now behind him and Althea, but also relegates Eden or Paradise to somewhere in the nation's past, now that an actual gilded age has replaced a mythic golden one. This exchange, with its obvious irony, ends the worldly wedding ceremony, but the story is not yet over. The story achieves its final irony in the couple's celibate honeymoon which takes them back to Eden in a newly affirmed union beyond the worldly preoccupations of sex and money that stand for marriage in Saratoga.

In going back to the Shakers, Lorenzo and Althea, are returning to a world characterized by peace, and the relation of peace to marriage has figured in all three of Howells's Shaker fictions discussed in this chapter. In The World of Chance, the name of Peace is given to a woman who chooses to forego sexual love and conventional domesticity. Ray may marry someone, but marriage will never be his way to this characterization of peace. In A Parting and A Meeting, Chloe equates Shaker life with peace, and marriage with a wife's

plaguing behavior and the loss of spouse and children. The Day of Their Wedding, too, presents Shaker life as peaceful but portrays it also as a life of vitality, connection, and interest, in which a mind need not "come and go" as Roger's does.

We see, then, that beyond The Undiscovered Country, Howells's fictions on Shaker themes move not only into a more open-ended portrayal of Shakers and Shakerism, as previous critics have noted, but also into a new relationship of realignment with the Shaker narrative and the marriage narrative in fiction. These realignments represent an alternative to the finalizing compulsion we have seen authors -- including Howells himself in The Undiscovered Country -- enacting on the Shakers. In The World of Chance, Howells separates a worldly couple and actually intimates that they can go on without each other; not only that, he puts the Shaker character's go-or-stay decision in the past before the action opens. By thus rewriting the courtship plot and displacing the Shaker-choice plot, he seems to have achieved a perspective that enabled him to refocus on Shakerism in subsequent stories with a wider sense of its possibilities, both as a way of life and as fictional material. In A Parting and a Meeting he literally disengages a young couple and follows them beyond their non-marriage into old age, rewriting the courtship and seduction plots and asking us to reconsider our assumptions on what constitutes being together and being

at peace. And when he rewrites the gilded age's honeymoon plot in The Day of Their Wedding, he takes us beyond the "mating and marrying" stage of a couple's journey and shows them moving back and going forward at the same time, to a union and peace that are both old and new. Howells's preoccupation with Shakerism thus enabled him not only to contemplate and comment on his cultural and historical age with all its varied impulses, but also to move beyond the necessary equation of love fiction and the matrimony of others.

CHAPTER V

"ALL THAT WERE LEFT OF THE COMMUNITY": CONSIGNING THE SHAKERS TO HISTORY IN THREE EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY NOVELS

Many of the communities have been forced to coalesce, because their numbers were insufficient to till the soil and keep the settlement self-supporting. The eyes of the young generation are turned worldward, and the serene-faced women and grave-eyed men who hold the remaining Communities, feel that "Ichabod" is written over their doorways. (678)

In the Old Testament (I Sam. 4:21, King James Version), we read of a woman who named her son Ichabod, or "Where is the glory?" because, when she was about to give birth, she heard that the ark of the Covenant, or the "glory of Israel," had been stolen by the Philistines, and that her husband and father-in-law had been killed. This reference to a community writing this stark expression over the doorway comes near the end of an article, "The Shaker Society An Experiment in Socialism" by Pauline Carrington Bouve in a 1910 issue of New England Magazine. The word can register a range of emotions, including despair, resignation, irony, and feelings of futility; whatever tone is used or implied, however, it means that something of profound significance, encompassing individual love, family connection, and communal identity has

been lost.

The following year, a New York Times article on the Shakers echoed a similar sentiment. It described the Enfield (Connecticut) community as "a quaint, ghostlike colony of religious fanatics," down to twenty-two in number at that time. In this article, Eldress Emily Copley told the reporter of seeing great numbers of Believers "'die off one by one until there are only a few of us left'"; she felt that the time was "'coming quickly'" when their religion would come to an end (qtd. in Stein 343).

The three novels in this chapter reveal American fiction writers appropriating Shakerism in different ways at this transitional stage. In Kate Douglas Wiggin's Susanna and Sue, published in 1909, we see Shakerism deployed yet again to endorse the world's wedlock and courtship plots, while at the same time we see the author pausing lovingly to cull the details of a vanishing Shaker life, as if she is compelled to collect its essence before it is gone. In Howells's The Vacation of the Kelwyns: An Idyl of the Middle Eighteen-Seventies, a work in progress in 1909 (Reeves, cited in Jones 94) which reached publication just after his death in 1920, the Shakers are presented as representatives of a fading life -- figures enacting virtues from an earlier era, in a deceptively pastoral American landscape. In Margaret Deland's The Way to Peace, published in 1910, the Shakers are few and most of them are aged. Deland, however, turns a wedlock plot

entertained on Shaker ground into a novel of counter-marriage and counter-traditional testimony, even while the daily rituals and voices of "all that were left of the community" are set down. Though this novel, too, places the vitality of Shakerism in the past, it nonetheless demonstrates the power of that vitality to re-assert itself.

As we saw in the last chapter, Howells had brought the Shaker narrative and the marriage narrative together in new alignments in A Parting and A Meeting and The Day of Their Wedding. Deland, too, problematizes both the marriage narrative and the necessary finalizing-away of the Shakers. At the same time, she reveals new possibilities in the novel form through bringing Shaker narratives to bear upon it.

Despite the New England Magazine's summary claim, however, we must remember that not all Shakers were ready to write "Ichabod" over the door by the end of the first decade in the twentieth century. These years did see three more closings: the Whitewater, Ohio, community and the four-year-old attempt in White Oak, Georgia, both in 1902, and the one at Shirley, Massachusetts (where Howells had been over thirty years before) in 1908. Another attempt in Narcoosee, Florida, lasted only from 1896 to 1911. Still, many Shakers in this period continued to enact their commitment to faith and work, both within their society and out in the world (Stein 344).

Shaker participation in the peace movement provides an example of this commitment. The Peace Convention held at

Mount Lebanon on 31 August 1905 brought Shakers and non-Shakers together for presentations from a variety of religious and reformist activists and organizations. Opening the proceedings, Eldress Anna White said that outsiders might think of the Shakers as "cloistered ... from the outside world, pursuing the even tenor of our ways," in such a manner that "the larger affairs of life, those pertaining to country and nation and not affecting us, would not enlist our sympathy nor engage our attention"; nevertheless, she maintained, the actual situation was "far otherwise" (qtd. in Stein 316). "No citizen," she continued, "is more thoroughly alive to the interests of state or nation than are the Shakers. In the Peace of the nation is our Peace" (qtd. Stein 316-317). ¹

Two publications, mentioned in the preceding chapter, also sought to state Shakerism's case before the public at this time: The Aletheia: Spirit of Truth A Series of Letters in Which the Principles of the United Society Known as Shakers are Set Forth and Illustrated, by Aurelia Mace of Sabbathday Lake, first published in 1899 and reissued in 1907; and Shakerism Its Meaning and Message Embracing An Historical Account, Statement of Belief and Spiritual Experience of the

¹ The Conference's resolutions, according to Stein, included "pleas for international arbitration of disputes, the reduction of all armaments, the establishment of commercial waterways as neutral zones, the interdiction of war loans, the strengthening of the judicial power of the Hague court, and commendation of President Theodore Roosevelt's efforts to effect peace between Russia and Japan" (Stein 317).

Church from Its Rise to the Present Day, published in 1904.² Mace's work contains an answer to Howells, first published in the Bangor Messenger in 1883. "We have been brought before the public," she observes, "in 'The Undiscovered Country,' by W.D. Howells" (29). To Mace's "understanding", Howells "leaves the country undiscovered, or the world in doubt of its existence"; she sees "Friend Howells" as "very fair and correct in what he says about the angel life" but asserts that he "hardly gives credit to our people for the intelligence which belongs to them" (30). She adds that in Shaker "ranks" there are "men with a collegiate education, and women learned and cultured" (30).

Mace's book is a collection of essays, poems, and letters "offered to the public" in order that the "Shakers may become better known" (ix). Subjects include Shaker belief in the duality of God and the Christ spirit (22-24); the position on atonement which states that "spirit of Christ is always near, if we will but believe and obey", in contrast to the worldly belief that "Jesus will some day come in literal clouds, and

² Stein notes Mace's agreement to a proposal advanced by Brother Alonzo Hollister and others to change the Society's name from Shakers to Alethians after "spirit of truth" (327); He quotes Mace as saying that "Calling Shakerism 'Christ's Second Appearance' has been a mistake from the beginning, and that mistake has entered our fundamental name. Christ has appeared in thousands, and is the atmosphere or spiritual life of all good" (qtd. in Stein 327).

Alonzo Hollister was a Mount Lebanon brother described by White and Taylor as "a skilful pharmacist" (316) and the "author of many valuable tracts", as well as a "thoughtful" preserver of "many priceless heirlooms of the old-time Shakers" (337).

the bodies of the dead will arise from their graves" (44); the belief in "baptism of fire and the Holy Spirit, the Christ" supplanting baptism by water (72), and in the Eucharist as "to be received by living the pure life which Jesus lived" (73). There are also stories of Mother Ann's voyage to America (30) her vision on the ship (61) and of the first Shakers in the Maine communities (45-48, 53-57).

In addition, the Aletheia documents the Maine Shakers' interactions with their Poland Spring worldly neighbors, and includes an 1884 reply to an outsider's description of Shaker worship in the People's News, informing those "who see so little to admire in the pure life the Shakers lead" that "we often see as much in your lives, and in your beliefs and in your manner of dress that seems strange and unaccountable to us, as you can possibly see in ours that seems strange and unaccountable to you" (67-68). Another of the entries closes with the invitation, "'Come and see,' for we want you to know" that Shaker communities are "not homes of servitude and sorrow" but of "liberty, cheerfulness, and peace," where "sisters and brothers enjoy each other's society in purity and refinement" and are able to realize "all the blessings that accrue from lives strictly disciplined in the school of Christ" (36). There is even an 1891 letter to Leo Tolstoi, suggested by reading his novel The Kreutzer Sonata, and informing him that in "bringing to light the unfruitful works of darkness," Tolstoi has "gone to the depths of human

depravity, as Ann Lee has done before you" (84).³

The design of The Aletheia, according to Stein, lends "an air of spirituality to the publication" (265). It includes twenty-two portraits of Shakers, each with a tribute in prose or verse. Stein sees a "note of monastic unity" in the pictures of the sisters, with their "uniform caps and berthas," while the brothers "by contrast, appear almost indistinguishable in dress from their worldly counterparts" (265). Stein reads this difference as signifying Mace's attempt to "create an impression in her volume that all the Believers were one in pursuit of the spirit of truth," while actually, he maintains "even in appearance, only the women were united" (265).

Whatever message the book conveys regarding unity in the society, it also has the quality of a personal keepsake album. Besides the individual portraits, there are group pictures of sisters, brothers, and children; a photograph of the lake itself faces a poem called "Sabbathday Lake" ⁴, and other photographs show the fashionable Poland Spring House hotel and

³ The letter, according to a footnote, was forwarded to Tolstoi by Brother Alonzo Hollister. For further information about Tolstoi's correspondence with Frederick Evans and Alonzo Hollister, see Desroche I:89, 243-44. For excerpts from this correspondence, see Morse 231-35.

⁴ "Upon thy shores, O lovely lake, / This calm midsummer day, / I seem to hear a voice which tells / Of ages passed away: ..." The poem goes on to recount the coming of the Indians, the Puritans, and the railroad. It does not mention the Shakers, but recounts the Indian's hearing the "voice of God" in "rolling waves and thunderings" before "science walked abroad" (17-18).

the Maine State building, as well as Shaker buildings. Another photograph shows a Shaker meeting, and still another, taken in 1886, shows the worldly carriages lined up on both sides of the road outside a Shaker Meeting House. Mace has intended to portray a living society, to an outside world that frequently misunderstands it; however, the book itself creates an impression contrary to its author's apparent intention. With its dated reminiscences and comments on the passing seasons, its collected histories, and its labels and tributes under the illustrations, it seems to be documenting a present already quickly becoming situated in the past. Susanna and Sue, as we will see, creates a similar impression of the Shakers, though from the outside.

The Preface to Shakerism Its Meaning and Message points out the need to "fit the principles embodied" in the Shaker faith "to the needs of the great world" (3). Like the Aletheia, this book is interspersed with poems and illustrations, but it is more systematic and comprehensive, and nearly three times as long. The first 220 pages offer a detailed history of Shakerism up to 1904, including the closings of some of the communities and the Shakers' involvement in vegetarianism, pacifism, and philanthropic concerns. There follow two chapters on Shaker spiritualism (219-52), and one on New Ideas (253-77) that offers updated explanations of Shaker belief, including a long paragraph on the "Equality of Sex" (256). This statement asserts that

"woman" may look to Ann Lee for "the first touch that struck off her chains and gave her absolute right to her own person" and that the

daughters of Ann Lee, alone among women, rejoice in true freedom, not alone from the bondage of man's domination, but freedom also for the curse of that desire "to her husband" by which, through the ages, he has ruled over her (256).

A chapter entitled "The Kingdom of Heaven (278-96) then explains celibacy and confession, and another chapter (297-309) is devoted to Shaker communism, maintaining that "the virgin life is necessary, even the foundation principle of religious communism" and that "communism, on other basis than a common religious faith, is an impossibility, although it is granted that well-organized cooperative systems may be successful and of great benefit to society" (299).⁵ However, White and Taylor go on, "Communitistic attempts admitting family relationships have inevitably proved failures, from the excess of private family feeling"; while it is true that this feeling is "necessarily part of humanity in its natural state," it is "equally true that people outgrow this natural state and are ready for a higher plane of life" (299).

Another chapter documents the numerous Shaker inventions and industries (310-17), and two more chapters describe Shaker worship services as they have evolved, and the Shaker religious and educational publications (319-35). The beliefs surrounding the funeral are explained in particular detail,

⁵ See also Nordhoff 409-418.

since the authors claim that it is in the funeral service that the "difference between the mental habit of the Shaker and the professed Christian of the outside order" is most apparent (333). Because the Shakers "aim to live every day the life of the angel in the human," a Shaker funeral, or more appropriately, "memorial service", is "a triumph, a transfiguration, a fusion of heavenly and earthly spheres" (333-34). Elder Frederick Evans's words, especially relevant to our consideration of The Undiscovered Country, are quoted:

'Let us do as the angels did by the Israelites and again by the early Christians, and refuse to identify the particular lump of matter by testifying, the man or woman is not here. Thus, when I die, may my body be buried, and be laid next in order to the body of the brother or sisters who immediately preceded me to that bourne from whence travellers do now so easily return to commune with the living.' (335)

Descriptions follow of Shaker gifts of power, song, prophecy, speaking in tongues, observing Christmas, healing, vision and prophecy (336-75).

The last three chapters (361-406) look to the future. The question "What Has Shakerism for You?" is answered in a four-page message that describes Shaker life as "a way to help yourself and others to think deeper, see farther, live better, to 'enter into living peace'" (385). The Shaker sister is proclaimed as the "freest woman in the world -- the free woman in Christ -- and a sweeter, happier, more womanly woman does not exist" (386); as the embodiment of the "Divine Maternal Spirit," she reveals to the world "for the first time, the

meaning of true motherhood -- more tender, more divine, as spiritual pangs are harder to bear than physical, as the spiritual being underlies and overtowers the natural" (386). The "freedom of community" provides the opportunity for each individual to find "his own particular gifts needed and valued by the rest" (387), the restriction falling only, "where it should always fall, on whatever is undue self-pleasing, or against the welfare and comfort of others" (388).

Thus, while Shakerism Its Meaning and Message offers its own compendium of Shaker beliefs, history, traditions, images, and accomplishments, its format unites it more insistently than that of the Aletheia to the present and the future. White and Taylor admit that Shakers are "dying out and up", but deny stoutly that Shakerism itself is dying: on the contrary, they proclaim it is only obeying the "spiral law of retrogression and fresh advance" (389). Meanwhile, they maintain that the "truths inherent in Shakerism are the underlying truths of God-life in all ages" and that the "mission of the Shaker is to illustrate and teach these principles of truth, these laws of light and freedom" (392). "Conditions suited to the needs of the new age," these authors predict, "will develop and take on form" (393). As this happens, "the Shaker faith and the Shaker life, will, from its elastic nature, be ready to receive the impress of newly revealed truth and expand in new forms," and "Souls harvested from earth conditions will anew, as of old, find in Shaker faith and practice their true home"

(393).

Stein, who calls the Shakers' 1905 Peace Conference the "climax of the reformist spirit in the society (317), sees White and Taylor's Shakerism Its Meaning and Message as the "crowning intellectual achievement by Shaker women during these decades of change" (266) and cites Priscilla Brewer in calling it the "last major Shaker public statement" (Brewer 200; qtd. in Stein 267).⁶ While the book did not bring in waves of new members, it did present the Shakers' own summing up of their past and their own sense of the present and vision for the future, at a time when the world outside was finalizing them in two ways -- by predicting their imminent demise, and by categorizing them, in their shrinking numbers and serene-faced and grave-eyed old age, as no longer constituting a threat to established churches or to the family institution. (Stein 344, 425). Thus, despite White and Taylor's assurances that advance would follow retrogression, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the Shakers were becoming relegated to America's past. The awakening of public interest in their material artifacts, which would cause them to be reclaimed, recast, and refinalized as part of America's cultural heritage, was still to come.

As I have noted, the three fictions I will discuss in

⁶ Anna White and Aurelia Mace both died in 1910.

this chapter appropriate Shakerism in different ways. Though the common finalizing scheme that unites these novels is the consigning of Shakers to history, the ways in which Wiggin, Howells, and Deland execute this scheme do not lend themselves to a unified treatment. All three treat Shakerism as an institution hovering between present and past. However, Susanna and Sue pays little attention to problems in the world outside and concentrates on capturing the Shakers in family-album poses; The Vacation of the Kelwyns also moves the Shakers from present to past, but in the context of a larger retrospective national picture of change and loss; and The Way to Peace problematizes the whole process of consigning.

Wiggin's 1923 autobiography, My Garden of Memory, may help explain the family-album or souvenir aspect of Susanna and Sue. In the autobiography, Wiggin recounts tells how she had been taken as a child to visit the Shakers at Alfred, Maine, and to attend their worship services, and that she had kept up her acquaintance with the sisters and brothers over the years. She recounts that she "suddenly felt like writing a tale of life among the Shakers," and that the Shakers permitted her to work on the last stages of the manuscript in a room in their Women's Community House. She describes her "spotless" room, with its "lavender-scented cotton sheets, its straight-backed, rush-bottomed chairs, and pine tables" as

a beautiful place to write, and a more beautiful place in which to think, surrounded as one was by such unworldly examples of cheerful self-denial, temperance, and devotion to an ideal that required

all these qualities in a true Believer. (Morse 243)

The resulting book, Susanna and Sue, published in 1909 in a handsomely illustrated gilt-edged edition with decorative page borders, is a story of a summer at a Maine Shaker Village to which Wiggin gives the Blakean name of Albion. Susanna Hathaway has left her charming but dissolute husband John and taken their small daughter Sue to find refuge with the Shakers. The narrative moves through the seasons from spring to autumn, and alternates between the Shaker village where the mother and daughter become absorbed into the community rituals -- Susanna is put to work in the herb garden and teaching the little girls -- and the old home in the world where John, his eyes opened by a letter Susanna has left for him, gradually reforms his life. Meanwhile, John's sister Louisa, whom Susanna has put in charge of their ten-year-old son Jack, continually reminds him of what he has lost through his failure as a husband and father. The Shakers hope to gather in the mother and daughter (though they see that the daughter's high spirits will be a challenge to them), but do not pressure them toward this end.

Susanna comes to know many of the Shakers, and to learn of their varied motivations. When she is eventually moved to speak her gratitude in the Meeting, Elder Daniel Gray "'echo[es] the sentiments of the Family'" when he says that Susanna "'has been an inspiration to the children, a comfort and aid to the Sisters, an intelligent and able comrade to the

Brethren, and a sincere and earnest student of the truth.'" (115)

As fall approaches, Louisa writes her a letter that John is a changed man, but Susanna does not receive it. She has had a dream vision of a deserted parent bird in a wood, a brown quail, with "'a young one by its side darting hither and thither, as if lost'" (199). In an old Shaker story, which Susanna has heard and often told to Sue, a fearless young quail that does not run before the Shakers is interpreted as an omen, and the omen is fulfilled in the arrival of a young girl, Polly Reed, to join their numbers.⁷ Susanna, however, translates the quail image into her own finalizing scheme; she sees it as a sign that she must go back to the world and to her son. She has also wrestled with the integrity of committing Sue to a Shaker life at such an early age, even if willing to take it up for herself. She says good-by to the Shakers, not knowing what she will find at home; but John meets her in a freshly painted house with a newly planted flower garden, begging her forgiveness. Her last admonition to Sue on their journey home is that they "'mustn't talk all

⁷ Polly Reed was a real Shaker who was adopted by the Shakers as they were travelling from the site of their Sodus Bay, new York, settlement back to Watervliet in 1825 under the leadership of Elder Calvin Green. She became a teacher, eldress, and preacher (104-105) and is known for receiving an intricate and beautiful spirit drawing dated 19 November 1848 (Stein 194). White and Taylor tell her story (155-157) and note that she was "'a finished scholar, a beautiful speaker, and a most loveable associate'" (157), whose "penmanship and map drawing were remarkable"; one of her maps is hard to distinguish from a "product of the engraver's art" (157).

the time about the dear, kind Shakers'" (216).

Two features of this sometimes cloying story are particularly relevant to this study: the reassertion of companionate marriage after a trial separation; and the gathering of Shaker details which gives the novel, like the Aletheia, a keepsake album quality. The novel's progression of alternating vignettes thus moves toward two different closures -- a happily-ever-after ending for Susanna and John, and a folding away of the lovable Shakers in the lavender of Wiggin's prose. This finalizing double-closure, however, disposes of both marriage and Shakerism in a way that absolves the reader from thinking further about either one, or about the tension that one might create for the other.

The main marriage narrative is the wedlock plot, the story of the resurrected marriage of Susanna and John; however, the resurrection of this marriage is held up against the Shaker courtship tale which we have found to be requisite, in some version, in every other text so far discussed in this study. In the courtship subplot, Nathan Bennett and Hetty Arnold have grown up in the community, in the "cool, cheerful, wholly impersonal attitude of Shaker friendship," which the narrator calls "a relation seemingly outside of and superior to sex, a relation more like that of two astral bodies than the more intimate one of a budding Adam and Eve" (123).

Nathan contemplates Hetty at public meeting, sitting just opposite her, across "the separating space which is the very

essence and sign of Shakerism" (125). The old and young women seated in a row across from him are described in sensuous terms:

[E]ach modest figure sat in its space with quiet, folded hands. The stiff caps hid their hair, whether it was silver or gold; the white surplices covered the shoulders and concealed beautiful curves as well as angular outlines; the throats were scarcely visible, whether they were yellow and wrinkled or young and white. (124)

Nathan and Hetty each sense "an electric current across the protective separating space; their eyes meet and say, "'I love you'"; he trembles so much in the dance that he can hardly stand; she wonders if he hears her heart palpitating: "Oh," says the narrator, "the joy of it, the terror of it, the strange exhilaration and the sudden sensation of sin and remorse!" (127)

Susanna, working with Hetty in the herb garden while Nathan is pruning a nearby apple tree, understands the glances she sees the pair exchange. She has often considered the "likelihood of such crises," and wondered why there were not more of them, considering "how frail human nature is" (130). As a sympathetic worldly visitor, she tries to counsel Hetty, but is met with a sharp rebuff: "'What have you had to give up? Nothing but a husband you didn't love, and a home you didn't want to stay in. Like as not you'll be a Shaker, and they'll take you for a saint; but anyway you've had your life....'" (132).

When Nathan seeks out Hetty after dark, their eyes "shed

meaning" (134). He says they cannot "'eat [the Shakers'] food, stay alongside of them, pray their prayers and act a lie all the time'" (135); she feels "'wicked and miserable and unfaithful'" (135); both blame their natural parents for abandoning them to the Shakers, the only people who have ever been kind to them. But they give up communal love for the same partial love that proved so costly to Urbino and Ellina, and leave to get married. Nathan will work for their breakfast, for he says they must leave the village as "'empty-handed'" as they came into it (137).

Despite all the dangers, however, or perhaps because of them, the tone of the narrative is celebratory: "Youth called to youth triumphantly; the Spirit was unheard, and all the theories of celibacy and the angelic life that had been poured into their ears vanished into thin air" (138). Like Hawthorne's Josiah and Miriam from seventy-six years before their story, Nathan and Hetty go "out into the world as Adam and Eve left the garden, with the knowledge of good and evil planted in their hearts" (139). Hetty hears the voice of the eldress, as in a dream: "'The children of this world marry; but the children of the resurrection do not marry, for they are as the angels'" (139); however, the voice fades as they move farther from the village and "almost" -- though apparently not entirely -- dies away into silence, because "Nathan's voice was nearer and Nathan's voice was dearer" (139).

The "almost" is not enough to raise doubts as to whether the episode privileges "natural love." Wiggin recounts "some embarrassment" at reading her manuscript aloud to the brothers and sisters, but reports that the love-and-flight story was "a tragedy they knew ... had been a not infrequent occurrence in the tranquil procession of the years" (Morse 243).

Susanna's background reveals that she was just as naive as Hetty when, a seventeen-year-old orphan, she married John not only because she loved him but also to get away from a home with her uncle, where she was unloved and unhappy. Hetty, though kindly cared for, is restless and discontent with the Shakers even before Nathan awakens her to "partial" love. Thus, as in "The Canterbury Pilgrims," the tale of one character complements the tale of another. However, in this marriage-plot novel, the Nathan-Hetty story is subordinated to the wedlock plot in which the love of Susanna and John is restored.

We are invited to expect his reformation almost as soon as John finds Susanna has gone and reads her letter. Susanna's mistake, the narrator tells us, has been to regard John "at thirty-two, as a finished product, a man who was finally this and this, and behaved so, and would never be any different" (36). John's capacity for change enables him to give up drinking and philandering; to work responsibly at his job in the store where he is a partner; to take an interest in his home; to fill Susanna's workbox with letters of love and

apology while she is gone, not knowing if she will ever read them; and even to begin loving the little daughter he has neglected in favor of his son.

His change as a feature of the novel calls to mind E.M. Forster's observation that although we know from history that "no human relationship is constant," we nonetheless expect the future to be "so different" from the past or present because "the perfect person is to come along, or the person we know already is to become perfect" (55). Novelists, Forster goes on, "usually end their books with marriage, and we do not object because we lend them our dreams" (55). Susanna and John's love has not been constant, but the story urges us to think that it will become so, not only because John has changed but because Susanna has gone home to her motherly duty with new assurance.

Her decision to leave coincides with the Shakers' day of confession and purification, and she goes to the eldress to say:

'I come as a child of the world who wants to go back to her duty, and hopes to do it better than she ever did before. She ought to be able to, because you have chastened her pride, taught her the lesson of patience, strengthened her will, purified her spirit, and cleansed her soul from bitterness and wrath.' (198)

Thus, though we are shown an unhappy marriage in the story, we still see marriage validated as natural in two cases, the Nathan-Hetty courtship vignette and the Susanna-John marriage plot, in contrast to the supposedly unnatural life of the

Shakers. Susanna, the narrator tells us, goes back to John "thinking it her plain duty," but she is rewarded by finding a "new love" at "journey's end," a "husband to whom she could say in that first sacred moment when they were alone together, 'Never mind, John! Let's forget, and begin all over again'" (218,225). There is a hint in this "sacred moment" of aloneness together that sexual love has been resurrected too.

On Susanna's last day with the Shakers, they are greeting each other with "More love" (169-171), a ritual affirmation that reaches out beyond the "partial" bond of marriage; Susanna goes "home" from this affirmation of communal feeling, back to a renewed and enhanced "partial" love for one man who has reformed himself to deserve it, driven by his own "partial" love for her. Just as Susanna interprets the quail dream from Shaker tradition as an affirmation of worldly family bonds, this renewal and enhancement of a couple's exclusionary feeling for each other is offered in Susanna and Sue as the only kind of "more love" the world can understand.

As in The Undiscovered Country, the Shakers in Susanna and Sue seem calculated to appeal to a readership invested in the marriage narrative. When Elder Daniel commiserates with Eldress Abby over the impending loss of Susanna and Sue to their community, he says he must "'suppose the Shakers don't own the whole of heaven It's a big place, and it belongs to God'" (162). The narrator says the same thing later, pointing out the "same moon" shining over people of all creeds

(218). This seems to imply a comprehensive vision in the novel that can include the Shakers in a marriage narrative without necessarily curtailing their authenticity. Even so, however, the story itself is never able to grant Shakerism that last measure of recognition, as a life that is not only ordered and serene but also a present and valid alternative to life in the world.

Instead, the Shaker characters are shown to offer Susanna an interlude for contemplating her own authenticity from a distance. Wiggin herself noted that the "background" in Susanna and Sue "stands out more vividly" than in her other books because it is "a thing apart, so unique, so hidden away, and of such heavenly tranquillity" (Morse 243). In Susanna's case, and apparently in Wiggin's, a sojourn with the Shakers offered a chance to move into a different mindset and rhythm, as a way of preparing to go back refreshed and renewed into one's own life. With the Shakers, Susanna finds a respite, a space which her married life never allowed her to "have her thoughts, her emotions, her words, her self, to herself once more" (21). However, she is able to use her Shaker experience this way because she retains some autonomy; she gives the Shakers a little money every week from her savings to offset the cost of providing for her and Sue; she is not required to confess; and she is allowed to keep Sue with her. Her life is similar to what it would be in a gathering or novitiate Shaker family. In her case, however, it entails no sacrifices. Her

life does have its crosses, especially as she worries about leaving her son. But when she does decide to return to the world, her newly chastened pride, improved patience, strengthened will, purified heart, and cleansed soul have been acquired through doing her work and following the Shakers' example, not from any sacrifices the Shakers have exacted from her. She has been free in the community to experience the Shakers' chastening and affirming rhythms, and to find her true self strengthened in the process, because she and the child, from whom she draws strength and purpose, have been on vacation together there.

This idea of Shakerism as offering a vacation, an interlude, away from the particular stresses of worldly life, is enhanced by a sense of Shakers as belonging to the past, being isolated in time as well as in distance and custom.⁸ Perhaps it was this very identification of Shakerism with a more vital past and an uncertain future that prompted Wiggin to make Susanna and Sue a chronicle of the minutiae of Shaker

⁸ "The number [of Shakers] is sadly diminished now," Wiggin writes in her autobiography, "masculine converts being especially few and far between. What wonder when 'open confession,' 'celibacy,' and 'holding goods in common' are the foundation stones of the Shaker creed ...?" (Morse 242)

The Alfred community closed in 1931 and its remaining members were transferred to Sabbathday Lake; there had been thirty-seven Shakers at Alfred in 1900, a decrease from fifty-five in 1880 (Brewer 216; census data not available for 1890). Of these thirty-seven, four women and three men were sixty and over, and nine girls and four boys were under sixteen. There were nine females, and no males, between sixteen and twenty-nine (Brewer 237).

life. She illustrates the need for such a chronicle by having John say, when Louisa tells him Susanna is in a Shaker community (though, on Susanna's instructions, she does not say which one) that he knows "Shaker egg-beaters and garden seeds and rocking chairs and -- oh, yes, I remember their religion's against marriage..."(186). Louisa knows even less than this.

Wiggin thus seems committed in this book to telling her readers about the Shakers, by collecting data concerning their history, doctrine, dress, stories and legends, food, herbs, regulations and routines, and songs, and by interweaving this data with her marriage plot. She even includes the music for two of the hymns she quotes, "I am never weary bringing my life unto God" (113) and "I am as sure that heaven is mine" (119). She describes the worship service and the dance, records a portion of the sermon (116), and we hear the sisters and brothers repeating the inspired ritual greeting, "More love" (167). She takes the reader around Susanna's room with its "shiny floors" painted robin's-egg blue and "neat braided rugs," and lists the "useful articles of Shaker manufacture" which "interested Sue greatly": the "exquisite straw work that covered the whisk broom; the mending basket, pincushions, needle-book, spool and watch-cases, hair receivers, pin-trays might all have been made by fairy fingers" (19). ⁹

⁹ Such items, however, are not the work of fairy fingers. They are, as a nineteenth-century advertisement stated, "products of diligence and intelligence"; they reflect, as Beverly Gordon points out, both the "sense of self" of individual sisters and their "strong communal pride" ("Fancy

Besides lists, anecdotes, and descriptions, Wiggin uses an account of a children's game to introduce both the Shaker view of marriage and the tales of Ann Lee and her early followers. Sue is "directing" the game, "chatting, planning, ordering, and suggesting expedients to her slower-minded and less-experienced companions," the little Shaker girls (46); Eldress Abby stops her, gently, when she overhears them calling their clothespin dolls Adam and Eve and Cain, "'just because,'" Sue later explains to Susanna, "'I thought the Shakers would 'specially like a Bible play'" (61).

The eldress intervenes, however, when she hears Sue say, "'and bimeby we'll let Eve have little new baby'" (47). Eldress Abby tells Susanna,

'Sue meant all right, she was only playing the plays of the world. ... [B]ut you can understand, Susanna, that we can't let our children play that way and get wrong ideas into their heads at the beginning.' (48-49)

This gives her an occasion to tell Susanna, and the reader,

'We don't condemn an honest, orderly marriage as a worldly institution, but we claim its has no place in Christ's kingdom; therefore we leave it to the world, where it belongs. The world's people live on the lower plane of Adam; the Shakers try to live on the Christ plain, in virgin purity, long-suffering, meekness, and patience.' (49)

The children's-game incident also provides a dramatic

Goods" 101, in Chmielewski et. al). Gordon's analysis, however, did not appear until the 1980s, and was accomplished in part through a tour of museums (102n). Wiggin offered the beginnings of an informal catalogue of these items before they attained their present status as objects of cultural, historical, and aesthetic interest.

situation for the novel to tell the story of Ann Lee in the English prison, with a soap-box for her cell. After acting this story out, assuming the roles of Ann Lee and James Whitaker who poured milk and wine down a pipestem through the key-hole to nourish her, the children are encouraged by Susanna to make a toy ship and turn their clothespin dolls into Ann Lee's first followers -- "'William Lee, Nancy Lee, James Whitaker, and I forget the others,'" recites one of the Shaker girls, "like an obedient parrot" (51) -- and act out the voyage from Liverpool to New York (51).

Susanna and the eldress thus leave the children "all as eager to play the history of Shakerism as they had been to dramatize the family life of Adam and Eve" (51) and the reader with an abridged lesson in Shaker history. The change of games may also suggest a levelling of doctrine, anticipating the elder's claim that no one group owns the whole of heaven, and also in keeping with the adaptability of children and the intensity with which they play. Sue, however, as we later learn, likes her original game better, and tells Susanna that one of the Shaker girls had said that "her mother and father were both Believers, and nobody was good enough to pour milk through the key-hole but her" (61), a footnote to the game that shows there can be rivalries and contentions in the Shaker village as well as in the world, at least among children.

The event also gives Susanna an occasion to speculate to

Abby as to why more people "'without ties, living useless lives, with no aim or object in them'" do not "'find their way here,'" to "'peace and goodness and helpfulness'", though she still feels "'the cross is there,'" however "'bravely'" the Shakers "'all bear it'" (52). Abby replies by "devoutly" quoting a hymn: "'There are roses on my cross most beautiful to see, / As I turn from all the dross from which it sets me free'" (52).

The sense of the Shaker life as a second-best choice, however, still comes through as Susanna says it "'was no cross for me to give up my husband at the time,'" but speculates that

'if a woman had a considerate, loving man to live with, one who would strengthen her and help her to be good, one who would protect and cherish her, one who would be an example to his children and bring them up in fear of the Lord -- that would be heaven below, too; and how could she bear to give it all up, when it seems so good, and so right?' (52)

Eldress Abby answers by asking,

'But don't you believe He sees a difference between a person that comes to Him when there is nowhere else to turn to -- a person that's tried all and found it wanting -- and one that gives up freely pleasure, gain, and husband, and home, to follow the Christ life?' (53)

She does admit that children can be what Susanna calls "'little saviours'"; she concedes that children can help those "'living in carnal marriage without a thought of godliness'" from "'going to the lowest perdition'" and claims that "'those we bring up make the best converts'" -- a statement that will become ironic when Nathan and Hetty depart. She affirms,

however, that "'to a Shaker, the greater the sacrifice, the greater the glory'" (54).

Wiggin is thus chronicling Shaker beliefs as well as accomplishments, suggesting a concern that both may be forgotten. She lists the Shaker products and activities -- brooms, floors-mops, tubs, pails, churns made by brothers, cloth of cotton, wool, and linen," and "dozens of other useful and marketable things, not forgetting their famous applesauce" (92). We hear what Shakers wear, how they cut their hair, what they eat -- including a variety of vegetables, and a special weekly dinner of "salt codfish, potatoes, onions, and milk gravy" (93). We learn that they were "the first people to raise, put up, and sell garden-seeds in the present day fashion" (89), an industry that goes back to the 1790s, but we are not told that competition among communities for sales districts sometimes caused dissension (Stein 136-37). We are told about the Shakers' botanical medicines (89), and we are given a list of what herbs they grow -- "chamomile, lobelia, bloodroot, wormwood, lovage, boneset, lemon and sweet balm, lavender and rue," and many more (90-91).

In addition to this listing and chronicling, we are given a gallery of Shaker characters: Eldress Abby; Elder Daniel, whose education and gifts, Susanna tells him, should lead him to "'a larger life'", though he maintains that in all his travels and perils on land and sea he has found Shaker life "'the greatest adventure of all,'" a "'splendid adventure in

ethics'" (205), and whose dialogues with Eldress Abby resemble those of a devoted and long-married worldly couple; Brother Ansel, slow-moving, humorously inclined, and easy-going, who is "drifting into the kingdom of heaven without any special effort on his part" (55), and for whom Shakerism is "not a longing of the soul, but a prudent theory of existence" (56); "chief musician" Sister Martha, who has "composed many hymns and tunes, some of them under circumstances that she believed might entitle them to be considered directly inspired" (97), and who, though "willing to make any sacrifice for her religion," does not wish to be confused by too many opposing theories of God's intentions" (96); and the elderly Sister Tabitha, who misses "the old times when visions were common, when the Spirit manifested itself in extraordinary ways, and the gift of tongues descended" (110). Tabitha tells Hetty, who has not yet absconded, that when the Shakers were a "'younger church'" they needed "'signs and manifestations, pictures and object lessons,'" but that now they have been "'trained to think and reason'" and have "'put away some of our picture books'" (111). Tabitha, we are told, will die within the year, and though she does not know this, she is prepared.

These are affectionate portraits which do not idealize the Shakers, though they do render them quaint at times. There is, however, an album quality about them, as if they are being consciously captured for posterity by a loving artist/chronicler/collector who has taken this task upon

herself. Like the rules and maxims and songs, the lists of inventions, herbs, fancy goods, and architectural details, they make Susanna and Sue not only a worldly wedlock-and-courtship novel but also a Shaker archive, a repository of images carefully created and arranged, which overlap their originals even before those originals depart.

The New England Magazine article quoted at the beginning of this chapter tells the Shaker story as if it is largely over, and it too is accompanied by images: richly textured photographs depicting the Shaker buildings at Enfield, New Hampshire, with the lake and mountains in the background; an elderly sister with downcast eyes and a veil draped over the back of her cap and around her neck, peeling apples in a Dutch-master composition; another sister sewing or crocheting in a rocking chair; a brother in a long coat and wide-brimmed hat using an old upright saw; a sister seated at a spinning wheel. Like the Aletheia portraits, these pictures have finalizing captions: "Fingers That Are Never Idle" for the sister doing handwork in the rocking chair, and "Where Old Time Ways Are Still in Vogue" for the sister at the spinning wheel. These pictures too carry the sense of Shakers being laid away gently in images that connect them to the past -- and of their own cooperation in furthering a benign image of themselves.¹⁰

However, a different sense emerges from photographs from

¹⁰ See DeWolfe on images of Shakers.

the same period taken by Alfred Shakers themselves. One, dated 1910, shows the exterior of the 1833 cow barn with the community's Pierce Arrow automobile visible through the open door (Eastman 31). Another, the work of Brother Delmer Wilson, shows a visiting brother in the Sabbathday Lake trustees' parlor, surrounded by evidence of Howells's impulse of the age; he is seated next to a carved and scrolled marble-topped table, and there is a patterned linoleum on the floor. These pictures, too, are constructed images, but they show the Shakers letting the present into their lives. They also show that the Shakers did not need to look quaint in their own records.

Nevertheless, Wiggin recounts, the Shakers had "an affection for Susanna and Sue," calling it "their own book,... written as it was by a dear, though religiously misguided friend," and kept a copy "on the cabinet organ in the sitting room, just under a photograph of the author" (Morse 243).

The Howells family, we remember, spent their summer vacation near the Shakers at Shirley, Massachusetts, in 1875; they came back the following summer and began their vacation there again. However, the marital discord of the couple in charge of their accommodation at the Shaker-owned Brick House, which they had experienced the previous summer as well, eventually drove them out to "'incredible luxury and peace'" of a summer hotel at Townsend Harbor (Howells, quoted in Gibson v). Elder John Whiteley recorded the move in his

journal for 24 July 1876 as "sudden and unexpected" and "one we feel to regret," as the Shakers had tried to negotiate in the matter. ¹¹ The contrast between Shaker celibacy and dysfunctional worldly marriage seems to have suggested The Vacation of the Kelwyns: An Idyl of the Middle Eighteen-Seventies (Gibson vi).

In this novel, the Kelwyn family from Boston lease an empty house from a Shaker community in southern New Hampshire, with a couple named Kite hired to look after them. Mr. Kite is to care for the farm and horse, and Mrs. Kite is to look after the house and cook for the Kelwyns. The Kelwyns assume the rent for the year, which is very low, with the understanding that the Kites will take it over at the end of the summer.

The Kelwyn family consists of Elmer and Carrie Kelwyn and their young sons Carl and Francie. Kelwyn is a professor of historical sociology at a university in Boston, and the summer arrangement comes about when a Shaker Elder comes to visit him in the hope that he will include the Shaker social experiment in his lectures, as the sect is badly in need of recruits from the world outside. Professor Kelwyn is disappointed to find their spacious and airy summer accommodations furnished with new, uniform pine sets instead of Shaker chairs and tables, but the whole family is disturbed by Mrs. Kite's poor cooking and household management and her blithe indifference to

¹¹ Copy of Elder John Whiteley's journal at Fruitlands Museum; original in private collection.

suggestions for doing things differently.

They are joined by Mrs. Kelwyn's twenty-seven-year-old niece, Parthenope Brook, who has grown up in Italy with her expatriate artist parents. They also come to know a young schoolmaster, Elihu Emerance, who has come to the area looking for summer employment spends much of his time with them. As Emerance's many interests include scientific cooking, he and Parthenope are able to compensate for some of Mrs. Kite's inadequacies. The love interest that grows between the artistic, novel-reading niece and the abstruse teacher, as Richard Chase explains, becomes a conflict between her tense, focused ethical idealism and his wider range of pursuits and flee-flowing, undirected susceptibility to feeling. Chase calls their engagement which ends the book a "marriage of principle and impulse" (182).

Meanwhile, Kelwyn forces the gracious and accommodating Brother Jasper to become involved in dismissing the Kites, and a painful scene ensues. Kelwyn makes Jasper accompany him to the field where Kite is working and forces Jasper to agree that the Kites are "'not fit to take boarders at all'" (188). When Jasper is silent, Kelwyn asks him directly, "'Is that so, Brother Jasper?'" and, "from Brother Jasper's writhing features" comes "a kind of scream" that emits itself in "a sharp 'Yee'" resembling "the cry of a sufferer in having his tooth drawn" (188).

Emerance and Parthenope find another accommodation for

the Kelwyns, and the Kelwyns and Kites are able to part on relatively cordial terms. The showdown in the field, however, petty as it may seem, involves the Shaker brother in a clash of worldly wills and classes, and the reader can feel his pain, however bemused the narrator's comparison to tooth-pulling. Like the courtship of Parthenope and Emerance, the scene evokes Howells's doctrine of complicity, or mutual implication, discussed in the previous chapters and synthesized by William McMurray as the "simultaneous union and division" that comprises "human existence" (494). According to this doctrine, family life, and the social life that is an extension of it, enact the complicity of God and humanity, through an ongoing recognition of union and division, self-identity and self-alienation. The courtship of Parthenope and Emerance is one test of this complicity, and the class conflict of Kelwyns and Kites is another. Thus, the scene in which Brother Jasper is forced to take a side he cannot entirely support may be the book's most painful moment because it violates his own Shaker ideal of union. Kelwyn in his turn has doubts about the way he has handled the matter; he does not believe that he has assumed his full "'private portion of the public debt which we all owe to the incapable, the inadequate, the -- the -- shiftless'" (257). Though he does not go so far as admitting it, he has visited part of that debt on the Shaker.

The setting in which all these conflicts are enacted is

rural America in its centennial year, celebrating its anniversary as a republic but beset with economic recession, rural decay, and, as Richard Chase observes, a loss of the old Puritan vitality (181-82). Farms stand abandoned, and tramps haunt the road. At the same time, however, the summer scene is enlivened by an exotic array of passers-by, including a bear-trainer and his bear, to whom Parthenope and Emerance give coffee when it is struck by lightning, and a gypsy fortune-teller in a painted wagon. The Shakers, all elderly, appear only briefly in the book; they figure largely as part of this backdrop except when Kelwyn drags Brother Jasper into his confrontation and lapse of complicity. As Joel M. Jones says, they represent the "ghost of an ideal" for Howells, in their alternative to the family, despite the "shortsightedness" of their celibacy (98). Once more, then, we see an attempt to capture the Shakers as a vanishing part of America: people one meets on vacation, however hectic the vacation may turn out to be, and who need to be chronicled, in their values as well as their quaintnesses, before they disappear.¹²

Thus, though Shakerism does not loom as large in this novel as it does in Howells's other fictions with Shakers in

¹² Authors interested in depicting regional characteristics as part of their chronicling of a 'vanishing' America used a variety of approaches. Particularly relevant are Sarah Orne Jewett's visions of communities which explore both regional identities (New England in Jewett's case) and alternatives to mainstream social roles and arrangements. I touch upon these possibilities later in this chapter. See Boone 286-87 and Sherman 72, 196-97, 216-17.

them, Howells has managed in this confrontation to show Shakerism in conflict with another facet of human complicity besides sexual love and marriage. Love and marriage, however, do figure in two instances in this novel, one when the Kelwyns attend a Shaker meeting, and the other when Parthenope, who has just found out that Emerance wants to write a play and put Shakers in it, asks Elder Nathaniel's advice about marriage, and, as it turns out, about plots.

In the Meeting scene, a visiting brother preaches a sermon on marriage: "'Go through the graveyards,'" he urges his listeners,

'and read the records on the tombstones of the delicate females, sometimes two or three, the wives of one husband, whose lives have been sacrificed. Look at the large families of children that wore their mothers out and grew up untrained and uneducated.' He did not see how any sensible man could hesitate to choose the better part and come and live ... away from the world and its snares in the safety of the Shaker home.' (140)

Mrs. Kelwyn looks around at the listeners: Parthenope seems "puzzled rather than abashed or offended"; Emerance seems to have "seized some thread of the discourse and gone into himself"; her husband looks "as if he would like to get up and protest"; the other men from the world show "varying degrees of amusement, but no very deep concern"; the other women from the world register "strong indignation and dissent"; the Shaker brothers seem "troubled"; and the "death-masks" of the sisters wear "only a pensive sadness," as if they are "oppressed by the sense of a mystery beyond their powers"

(141).

Here we have a worldly visitor of some acuteness, collecting images of an interaction between Shakerism and the world as Shakers and world's people listen to the same message and seem to be hearing it in varying degrees of complicity. On the way home, Mrs. Kelwyn tells Mrs. Kite she has found the sermon "'in very poor taste'", but Mrs. Kite replies,

'Well, I don't know. The more you see of the Shakers the more you think there is something to what they say. I don't know as I should want to be one of them; but, the way I looks at a couple like Tad Allson and his wife, I don't think marriage is always such a great success.' (142)

When Mrs. Kelwyn answers "severely" that "'life among the Shakers'" would not be any more of "'a great success'" than life in the world "'if the men were drunkards and the women were slatterns,'" Mrs. Kite says cheerfully, "'Well, I guess that's something so'" (142).

The neighbor Mrs. Allson, with the alcoholic husband, later says to Parthenope that she has heard of this sermon. "'I guess,'" the young mother of six tells the unmarried woman,

'he don't know everything. If he did he wouldn't said so much about the children. I guess there'd be more divorces and more killin's if it wa'n't for them. ... Sometimes it don't seem as if I could get through the trouble they give. But I hain't never lost a single one; I believe if I did it would about kill me. I should like the Shakers to understand that. The Shaker ladies do, I guess!' (166-167)

Mrs. Kite thinks the sermon, and the Shakers, have a point; Mrs. Allson, rural and uneducated, with her succession of new babies, disagrees with the sermon but can enter into

imaginative sympathy with the Shaker sisters, whether or not they would all share her sentiments about children. Mrs. Kelwyn and the other indignant women from the world who heard the sermon, and whose class origins are probably closer to hers, seem more confined by their own narrative.

In a later scene, Parthenope asks Elder Nathaniel if all the married people in the countryside are "'divorced or living unhappily, or something?'" To his "'Nay'" she goes on to ask why the Shakers do not approve of marriage, and hears his answer that it is approved "'in the earthly order'", but that they believe the "'angelic life is better'" (177). She asks why more people in the earthly order do not live "'peaceably and affectionately'" as the Shakers would approve (177), and he replies, "'Nay, I cannot tell you that. Perhaps it is because they are too ignorant of life and expect too much of each other'" (178).

Parthenope is then surprised to learn that Elder Nathaniel was married himself, to a woman he had known from childhood, who came with him and their five children to the Shakers and lived and died in the Family house where the Kelwyns are spending the summer. Thus, what for the Kelwyns is a beautifully proportioned but ill-managed vacation house was for him a scene of genuine commitment and a place of renouncing important ties, taking on different ones, and experiencing loss. All three of his daughters, he tells Parthenope, "'got foolish about some of the young men in the

Family and ran away to be married'; one son died, and one has left the order and works as press agent to a popular actress; Nathaniel's daughters are "'well-to-do, and in the earthly order they are happy'" as far as he knows. (179)

He answers her question about having a son working in the theatre by saying "'the theatre is no worse than the other things in the world-outside,'" but adding that he "'could see how it might do some good with the right kind of play'; the play he went to see at his son's invitation was "'foolish'" because it did not "'show the life of the world as it really is'". Instead, it pretended that "when young folks who had got foolish about each other were married, they were going to be happy because they were married'" (179-180).

Elihu's interest in writing plays is no doubt on Parthenope's mind when she asks Nathaniel if he would have objected to his daughters' marrying actors rather than Shakers. Of course, he reminds her, marriage to anyone is the end of being a Shaker; thus, he has never thought of the kind of profession he would like a son-in-law to have. "'What you would wish them to do,'" she then says, "'would be to think very seriously before they married at all'"; "'Nay,'" he replies, "'the thinking seriously might better the case, but it would not change its nature. I had no wish but that they should remain Shakers'" (180). Elder Nathaniel achieves a gain in authenticity by holding out in this way against the marriage narrative. Unlike the Shakers in The Undiscovered

Country, he does not become a medium for worldly love, even though Parthenope seems to be trying to use him to help her validate her own feelings. In the end she will have to cope with the knowledge that she and Emerance will not always see things the same way, no matter how much her focusing and his inspiration temper each other, and that they will not always be happy simply because they are married.

Just before the talk with Elder Nathaniel, she has had reason to become upset in a conversation with Emerance about life and acting: he has called life "'living a play and acting it'" (172), not to deceive, but to construct a new truth. Recounting his brief experience acting a small part in a friend's play, he says, "'I enjoyed the story, but first I want to live it. I want to act a play of my own'" (171). He seems "to be consulting with her" when he says "'Of course, it has to be a love story and it has to end well,'" and he realizes that it is neither a tragedy nor a comedy (171). He is testing the role she might be willing to play in his drama, and it troubles her to hear her future cast in these terms.

In the same conversation, he has also troubled her by the way he brings religion and art together:

'If I didn't love the art of the theatre, I'm afraid I shouldn't care for what we call the "good it can do." If the art didn't come first I would rather be a minister. A minister must be an actor, you know.' (171).

Proposing this relation between ministry and art, he does not mean that ministers who are actors in the course of their

ministering are hypocrites, but rather that they are creators of truth. He says he should like to set part of his play in a Shaker village; his "'principal characters wouldn't be Shakers,'" but he believes that certain "features of Shaker life" -- including the dance -- "would be very effective on the stage'" (171-72). Parthenope objects, "horrified": "'But that's part of their worship!'" (172). He answers with a reference to the role of staged worship in Greek tragedy, but adds, "'To be sure, it was their own worship. I must think it over; I wouldn't want to wound the Shakers for the world'" (172).

Both Emerance and Parthenope are aware that appropriating other people's rituals for art, especially performance art, may strain complicity. Just as, in The World of Chance, our sins and expiations can never be carried alone, we can also 'wound' others through our enthusiasms. The aging Shakers are being encroached upon by Kelwyn's insistent logic, by Parthenope's vicarious self-searching and by Emerance's aspirations for acting his life; nevertheless, their presence, even in diminished numbers, gives Howells one last occasion to ask this question.

It is significant in this regard to remember that when the Shaker Elder first approaches Kelwyn with the idea that the professor "would be pleased, in his quality of lecturer on Historical Sociology, to know something of the social experiment of the Shakers, Kelwyn is "filled with amusement at

the notion of his august science stooping to inquire into such a lowly experiment as that of those rustic communists" (7-8). Howells's first readers might not have known that Nordhoff's book, Communistic Societies of the United States, had appeared the same year as the first vacation of the Howellses at Shirley; that text, which I have cited frequently in this study, was one of the nineteenth century's most significant contributions to American social history,¹³ and it had devoted over a hundred pages to the "rustic" Shakers and their "lowly experiment." Nevertheless, this may still be an early indication in the novel of how we are meant to view Professor Kelwyn's capacity to evaluate what is happening in his world. It may also be an acknowledgement that Shakerism, even when embodied in a few aging characters, still offers challenges to those who think they can finalize it from the outside, whether the scheme they use is an academic discipline, a stage drama, or a version of the marriage narrative.

Margaret Deland's novella, The Way to Peace, contains an illustration by Alice Barbour Stephens that provides the title for this chapter. It shows the three elderly brothers and five of the eight elderly sisters comprising "all that were left" of the story's Shaker community (30-31). They are assembled after supper, men massed at one side, women at the other, though the groups are not separated by space. Brother Nathan

¹³ Melcher (298) and Mark Holloway (ix) both acknowledge Nordhoff's contribution in this area.

is shown reading his weekly Farmer; Brother William has his hymn book on his lap; Brother George is cutting out pictures from a magazine. Two sisters are knitting; two are sitting with "their tired, idle hands in their laps, their eyes closed" (30); only the face of another is visible, and we do not see the two more who "speak occasionally between themselves of their various tasks" (30). The portraits are individualized, and the faces are gentle and softly lined, not sharp or angular. These Shakers are old and in repose, but they are alive; they are grouped by gender, but they are a family.

Deland was fifty-three in 1910. She was widely read in her own time. However, Barbara Welter listed her in 1976 with Augusta Wilson and Elizabeth Ward as writers who, though not included in courses in American thought or religion, were read Americans in the nineteenth century than were Emerson, Rauschenbusch, and William James ("Defenders . . .", cited Morey 108n). In her study of religion and sexuality in American literature, Ann-Janine Morey analyzes Deland's first novel, John Ward, Preacher, published in 1882, and recommends two of her other novels, The Awakening of Helena Richey (1905) and The Iron Woman (also published in 1910) as "sequential histories of moral development" (136n).

Morey discusses Deland in the context of the "homiletic" novel, in the tradition of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (Ward), and Ellen Glasgow. Two major versions

of this genre deal with the trials of ministers' families, especially the overworked and unappreciated wives, and with the "idea of the saintly and spiritually superior woman" (Morey 109). The Way to Peace, Deland's appropriation of Shakerism to this form of fiction, demonstrates what Morey calls her "sense of the complexity of the stakes" (135) and her refusal to "sacrifice" her sense of this complexity "for the expedience of ideological purity" (134).¹⁴

The Way to Peace in its 1910 Harper edition is a slim volume of ninety-four pages, and it would be still slimmer without the wide spacing of type and the delicately wrought page decorations. However, despite its slenderness, it represents a substantial accomplishment. It rewrites the standard plot of the wife who must efface herself to sustain her husband's career in the church; it casts the saintly woman in an ambiguous light; and it places Shakerism both in the marriage narrative and beyond it, through the combined openness and integrity of its plot and structure.

At the beginning of the story, Athalia Hall and her husband Lewis are between trains in a rural area (designated as New England by a reference to a nearby covered bridge). Athalia is thirty-four, Lewis is some years older, and they

¹⁴ See Deland's "Change in the Feminine Ideal" (1910) and Banta's analysis 58-62. Banta points to an unwillingness on Deland's part, similar to that considered by Morey, to sacrifice complexity for ideological purity in the area of new roles for women. She contrasts a new self-centeredness in young women with the selflessness of their mothers, recognizing dangers in both attitudes (60).

have been married eight years. At Athalia's urging, they climb a hill to see a view, and they find themselves in a Shaker cemetery. A Shaker brother, Nathan Dale, appears, and in response to Athalia's eager request and questions, takes them back to visit the community. Athalia is taken with the peace and purposefulness of the life; Lewis, who has an academic background in theology and Hebrew, though he works as a country lawyer and operates a family sawmill, discusses Prophecies with Nathan.

By the time Athalia and Lewis reach their home, Athalia has developed a passionate curiosity about the Shakers, and she writes to ask if she may visit them. The Shakers agree, reluctantly, though Nathan suggests that Lewis would be the better addition of their community. Athalia comes home after three weeks and tells Lewis she wishes to join the Shaker order. She has already left Lewis in spirit, she says, but the Shakers need his signature on a document releasing her from the marriage.

Discussion between them over this step goes on through the winter. When Athalia resolves in the spring that she is going, Lewis tells her he will go too. He has arranged, without Athalia's knowledge, to live in a house near the Shaker village and help the Shakers with their work. He does not believe Athalia has "'the head for Shakerism'" (41). He has described her to his aunt as "'sincere'" but "'temporary'"; perhaps because she is the child of an actress,

she is in the habit of creating emotions by expressing them. They are real emotions while they last, but they do not last very long (5-6).

She is thwarted in creating her emotions at the parting from their old home, because Lewis is "cruelly commonplace" about it (55); She is "ready to press into her soul the poignant thorn of grief, not only because it would make her feel, but because it would emphasize in her own mind the divine self-sacrifice she was making" (55). Here we have the thorn in the flesh as a means of inducing her version of Phillips's "rapturous pain" from The Undiscovered Country.

The couple go to the Shakers together, and Athalia throws herself devotedly into her new life. After a year, Lewis becomes ill in his little house, and when Athalia comes in with his mail, he asks her to go home. She recoils, and hurries away. Eldress Hannah and Brother Nathan nurse Lewis back to health, and Lewis's increased intimacy with Nathan makes him think more often of the Prophecies and less often of Athalia.

After another winter, Athalia has grown tired and irritable from all the work, especially as one of the sisters has died. Her enthusiasm waning, she begins to talk of going back to their home in the world. Lewis, however, tells her that though he is "'not sure yet'", he feels he is becoming a Shaker (83). She reminds him that he has always said Shakerism is "'not human,'" and he reiterates and expands on what Nathan

has said all along, that the "'unhumanness'" of Shakerism is what makes it "'of God'" (83): "'The humanness in us must give way to the divine. First that which is natural; then that which is spiritual'" (83-84).

This change, and the prospect that her old home might not await her if she comes out of this temporary enthusiasm, make Athalia ill. Meanwhile, Lewis continues his study and contemplation, and a week later at sunset experiences a mystical conversion and marvels at the ways of God that brought him up the hill to the cemetery two years before. The sun goes down, leaving the "solemn glow of half-astonished gratitude" on his face (86), and Athalia appears out of the dark, begging him to take her home. When he says to her, in "a terrified voice, 'I am -- I am a Shaker!'" she is shocked and frightened that he no longer loves her and that he cannot give up his "new religion" even for her (90). She tries to win him back with a burning kiss, but he moves back, his "hands clinched slightly," and sighs, "'Don't, sister'" (91). "'Sister?'" she cries; "'My God!'" and she leaves him.

She also leaves the Shakers; it is arranged that she will go back to their old home until she decides what next to do. At the time she is to leave, he goes up to mow the cemetery, watches the Shakers' carriage take her away, and hides his face "in his bent elbow" (92).

Ten years pass, and Eldress Hannah receives word that Athalia is dying and would like to see Lewis. Lewis goes to

the city where she has been living and finds her in a "gaudy hotel, full of the glare of pushing, hurrying life"; he sits at her bedside, and looks at her with "mild, remote eyes" (93). When she asks him if he forgives her, he can think of nothing that needs forgiving, but she becomes so upset when he calls her "'sister'" that he forgives her to calm her. Her weeping, however, brings his mind out of its region of collective love, and in surprise and anguish he becomes her husband again, long enough to comfort her until she falls asleep.

The story rewrites some of the views of Shakerism and of love fiction that we have seen in the other texts of this study: the grave imagery; the perceptions of Shakerism as an obstacle to young love, or as a last resort for people who fail in the world; the roles of husband and wife; and the character of the saintly woman in the homiletic convention. It also takes liberties with the novel form by its use of a subplot that works on the story from outside.

The graveyard is the point of entry to the Shakers for Lewis and Athalia. Before they see any living Shakers, they see the rows of small stakes marking the heads and feet of the graves, and the slight depressions in the ground. When Brother Nathan comes, he is carrying a sickle to cut the pennyroyal that grows there; he thus becomes a kindly reaper who, as it turns out, gathers them in. The first building they enter in the community is the drying house, where they are

struck by the "overpowering scent of drying herbs" and the working sisters' silence, apparently of "peace and meditation" (20). The word "peace" recurs like a litany, an uncharacteristic word for Athalia, as Lewis has pointed out in the cemetery that she "'doesn't take much to peace at home'" (11). In the herb-drying house we also find Lewis observing that the calmness is "'unhuman'" (21) -- another word that recurs throughout the story.

The Shaker village reached through the grave in this story, however, though it is peaceful, is not a place to lie down in and cease living. In bringing Athalia and Lewis to the Shakers through images of graves, reaping, and a drying out to essences, Deland portrays Shakerism as a life both beyond the grave and on this side of it. Shakerism and marriage are later presented through the same image of going beyond. "'Marriage,'" Nathan later tells Lewis, "'is honorable'"; "'Shakers don't despise marriage. But they like to see folks grow out of it into something better'" (66). Nathan says this when Athalia is immersing herself in her "eager consciousness of her part" as a Shaker sister, living her play (60), and the above speech ends with words that become ironic: "'like your wife, maybe'" (66). However, for Lewis, Shakerism does become something better, for which the trappings of death have presented an entry.

In a similar vein, Deland moves the focus of conflict between love and Shakerism away from youth and toward middle

age. And Athalia and Lewis are not only past their first youth and no longer newlyweds; they also enter Shakerism from a position of relative prosperity in the world; they are not poor and defeated financially. In fact, they are sufficiently well-off that Athalia has time on her hands, being spared "much wholesome occupation which would have been steadying to her eager nature" (6). If she "'didn't have everything she wanted,'" Lewis reflects, "'perhaps she would be happier'" (30).

The story turns the homiletic formula around by making the husband the partner who rearranges his life around his wife's religious course, and the wife the one who mixes faith and egotism, sometimes at the expense of others. Athalia as saintly woman is sincere when she says she is willing to "'die for a religious belief,'" but she later finds some truth in Lewis's admonition that it is "'living for it that's hard'" (41).

Besides providing countertraditional testimony to marriage fiction in its focus on a couple at or near middle age, The Way to Peace also stretches the novel form by offering a subplot that exists entirely outside the action. This is the Sister Lydia story. Almost from the beginning, we hear her name. Nathan says she was the only female he has known who could cut pennyroyal (15); Eldress Hannah tells how Lydia came to them as child and left twenty years ago for the world again (23); when Athalia's letter comes requesting a

visit, another comes from Lydia, who is "'in great misery'" (32); Nathan came to the Shakers after meeting her when she was out selling baskets and gave him a book that "'clinched'" him (65), but she left just after he arrived; the other sisters remember her as a good nurse (79); Athalia may have to give up her room to her if she comes back, and thinks Nathan is "'too pleased for a Shaker'" at the prospect of her return (81).

We do not hear if Lydia does come back. However, the story of Lydia, Nathan, and Shakerism helps us situate the story of Athalia, Lewis, and Shakerism in a larger context. Nathan apparently loves Lydia, though he has loved her in a Shaker setting. Rather than follow her into the world (though we do not know why she left -- perhaps with another man), he has chosen Shaker life without her, but she seems never to have been far from his thoughts. Wanting to be with her, however, is not necessarily desiring her with any intent of sexual consummation, but rather wanting her proximity and her shared participation in their Shaker rituals of peace. Like Lewis's conversion and Athalia's discomfiture, his tender ministering loyalty offers counter-traditional testimony to worldly married love.

This version of love on Shaker ground keeps asserting itself from the periphery of the Athalia/Lewis/Shakerism story. It has started twenty years before they climb the Shaker hill; it will continue after Athalia leaves; we are

left wondering if Lydia came back, if she stayed, if she and Nathan are together in a Shaker or a worldly sense. That part of the story remains open-ended. This formal method of plotting the text -- a rewritten Shaker courtship plot playing itself out around a rewritten Shaker wedlock plot -- extends the world of the novel beyond the beginning and end of its main story. In DuPlessis's sense, this method writes beyond the ending; in Boone's, it overturns the form of the novel by challenging its boundaries, all the while portraying Shakerism as a love narrative that resists definition while it exerts a powerful ideological force.

At the end of the story, three old brothers and seven old sisters remain, but they are no longer "all" that are "left of the community" (31). They have gained Lewis, and they might have regained Lydia. This seems to affirm what Eldress Hannah says to Lewis, when they first meet: "'Yee; there are not many of us now. The world's people will say we're dying out. But the Lord will produce the remnant to redeem the world, young man'" (22). Of all the three fictions explored in this chapter, Deland's is the only one to hold out for this possibility, even if this redemption takes no other form than asking us to look again at our lives. Of course, we can do this from an album of Shakerism such as Wiggin gives us in Susanna and Sue, or from a troubled idyl of nineteenth-century America such as Howells gives us in The Vacation of the Kelwyns. The Way to Peace, however, helps us to recognize a

residual authenticity in Shakerism's continuing power to attract both dramatic natures like Athalia's and more reasoning minds like Lewis's. It also helps us recognize that marriage and the grave need not be the only forms of closure, for love or for love stories, by showing us the possibility of a love here on earth that exists beyond both.

The Eldress's words about the remnant redeeming the world help us to recall White and Taylor's assurances of the "spiral law of retrogression and fresh advance" (389) that characterize human experience and that could yet promise a renewal of Shakerism. They also offer new ways of looking at novelistic treatments of Shakerism which are consistent with this pattern. Boone's chapter on novels of female community, focusing on Sarah Scott's A Description of Millennium Hall (1762), Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford (1853), Sarah Orne Jewett's The Country of the Pointed Firs (1896), and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Herland (1915), focuses on what he calls the centric structure of these texts, in which a "nonlinear order" produced by "layering and accretion of both event and exposition" helps create a "continual rhythm of flux and reflux around their dramatic events" (286-87). This ordering of narrative helps these texts to illustrate "the collective power of the female community to expel or incorporate male reality according to its needs" and thus to "reflect the hard-earned autonomy, the centered lives, of its time-battered yet self-sustaining members" (287).

Shaker communities have usually not been all-female, even though the women have been in the majority since the Civil War; Stein, Procter Smith, Campbell, and the Nicklesses, among other scholars, have all demonstrated that Shaker sisters have had to deal with issues of male reality, often expressed in patriarchal attitudes and constructs. Nevertheless, the above quote, with a little modifying, can be applied to a consideration of Shakerism and the novel. Novels about Shakerism, too, have the potential to illustrate the "collective power of the [male and female celibate] community to expel or incorporate [physical generation] according to its needs" -- expelling sexuality and marriage but incorporating converts and children.

Novels that are capable of recognizing this collective power, in all its subversiveness, can then employ centric or non-linear versions of narrative form to reflect this "hard-earned autonomy" and "centered lives" of the "time-battered yet self-sustaining" Shaker women and men. Thus, Boone's assertion about The Country of the Pointed Firs could also apply to a novel of Shakerism. Jewett, says Boone,

creates a counter-traditional text about primarily single and widowed women who, having long since centered their lives in communal stasis, have in turn become creators of a counter-traditional reality in which emotional commitment and autonomy harmoniously exist. (304) ¹⁵

¹⁵ For a discussion of friendship and feminine mysteries in The Country of the Pointed Firs, see Sherman 72, 196-97, 216-17.

Such a novel may also accomplish what Boone attributes to the narratives of Mary Wilkins Freeman, whose "A New England Nun" and Other Stories was published in 1891: "illustrating the viability of unions other than marriage to satisfy basic human desires for intimacy" (323). ¹⁶

A Shaker community, too, may represent this counter-traditional reality in which emotional commitment exists in harmony with the Shaker version of autonomy -- a separation from worldly ties that permits each individual's entry into gospel union. In this way, a Shaker community offers rich possibilities to the counter-traditional novelist. As we have seen in this study, some authors have taken advantage of this opportunity, offered by Shaker life and the novel genre, to explore alternative versions of authenticity and to test the possibilities of narrative forms in this exploration. Deland's novel and the later Shaker fictions of Howells, in particular, have found narrative forms that move outside the

¹⁶ Such unions are not unproblematic, as Boone points out in relation to Freeman's depictions of mother-daughter bonds (323). In "A New England Nun," the alternative to marriage for Louisa Ellis is a non-communal celibacy which nonetheless decenters marriage as the necessary outcome of a life and a story. Other fictions of this period which were questioning this centrality include Edith Wharton's The House of Mirth (1905) and Ethan Frome (1911) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's stories for the Forerunner, especially "The Unnatural Mother" (1914), which, like "A New England Nun", demonstrates that domesticity need not be constructed within conventional middle-class boundaries. Robert Frost's "Home Burial," published in North of Boston (1914) portrays the tragic breakdown of communication in marriage.

traditional marriage narrative form, with in Boone's words, its "ordered sequence of intensifying crises," its "breakthrough, reversal, and resolution," and its "illusion of completeness and stability" (77). They have recognized the possibilities Shakerism offers, and that Boone identifies in counter-traditional novels, to people their stories and structure their plots differently. They use characters who are beyond the ages of traditional lovers, or already engaged or even married. They take these characters through events and circumstances that proceed in "dots and particles" (Firkins 168) or fluxes and refluxes (Boone 286-87) or spirals of retrogression and advance (White and Taylor 389). They leave their characters in circumstances and emotional conditions that are not necessarily stable or resolved, but subject to further development. And they extend their texts' spatial fields, by connecting their characters to other stories outside the world of the particular story or novel in which they appear (Boone 193-94, 224).

In these ways, Howells (in the novellas) and Deland achieve a fusion of Shakerism and fiction that has largely eluded the other writers in this study. This fusion is possible for them, as it was for Elkins half a century before them, because their agendas for authorship did not require them to defamiliarize Shakerism, to render it quaint or inauthentic, or to encapsulate it in a finalizing scheme in order to neutralize its subversive potential. An openness to

the possibilities of counter-traditional reality in life narratives and in fictional forms enabled them to create literary texts that bring Shakerism into dialogic interplay with the other voices of their times, and of our own.

AFTERWORD

"THE TRUTHS BEHIND OUR TROPES"

This study has focused on the various strategies or finalizing schemes that outside writers of Shaker fictions have used to create distance from the Shakers, in response to the threat Shakerism has posed for the marriage narrative. I have demonstrated some of these major strategies and schemes: authoring the Shakers through other available texts; defamiliarizing Shakers through the structures and formal elements of the gothic sensibility; foregrounding "otherness" in the Shaker family, especially in distinguishing Shaker and worldly constructs of home and mother; and consigning Shakers to the cultural landscape of the past. I have also demonstrated that certain textual practices, such as the realigning strategies of Howells in his fictions beyond The Undiscovered Country and Deland in The Way to Peace, may bring the Shaker plots of celibacy and communalism into new and more liberating patterns with the love plots of the world.

Deland and the later Howells, as I have shown, are the authors in this study who have seemed most capable of recognizing authenticity in these Shaker plots. Unlike many of their predecessors and successors with more conventional

agendas, they are not compelled to impose a shield of reconstructive practices upon Shakerism to keep its subversiveness at bay. On the contrary, they have expanded the formal possibilities of the novel genre in ways that accommodate their recognition of Shaker authenticity.¹ For them, Shakerism has thus become an integrated yet still distinctive voice in the literary text, rather than a thorn. They have found material in Shakerism for counter-traditional alternatives to both the "signifying content" and the conventional forms of love fiction.

With the consigning of Shakers to history, however, which was already going on as Howells, Deland, and Wiggin were writing the novels discussed in the last chapter (and to which their works contributed in varying degrees), much of the task of interpreting Shakerism has been assumed by museums. Novelists who have appropriated Shakerism since the 1920s have therefore found themselves writing for a readership that knows about Shakers largely through their material culture, and that looks to museums and history books for most of its authoritative information about the people who produced the baskets and boxes and chairs.

As we saw in the last chapter, writers from the early part of the century were already treating Shakerism with what

¹ Whether their openness to Shaker authenticity led them to experiments with form, or whether their openness to new formal possibilities in fiction led them to an enhanced sense of Shaker authenticity, is an interesting genealogical question worthy of further study.

Herma R. Cate calls a "nostalgic admiration for a way of life that is rapidly disappearing (23).² Sometimes this admiration could be tinged with pity, as we see from a poem "The Eldress" by Pauline Carrington Bouve in the same issue of New England Magazine that carried her article proclaiming the Shaker "mission" as "ended" (678). The "fair sweet woman sister" addressed in the poem, "sitting there / Among the children pupils" is told that she "counterfeit[s] the care / of motherhood" and knows "naught of the highest strife --/ The strange, divinely joyous pain of those who bear / souls to the world"; "Haply", the poem confides, "you do not dream / Of things your life has never missed." (751)

The poet cannot imagine that the Shaker sister's version of motherhood with her adopted charges might have had its own share of the "plenitude of mortal joy and pain" (751). Six years later the chorus of disapproving women in one of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Forerunner stories, "The Unnatural Mother," would voice similar sentiments, calling Esther

² See especially Clara Endicott Sears, The Romance of Fiddlers' Green (1922). Cate cites Sears' portrayal of Shakerism in this novel as "a mystical faith which searches deep into the depths of man's heart and brings up goodness" (Cate 23). Sears published Gleanings from Old Shaker Journals in 1916, and was responsible for creating the first Shaker museum in the Harvard trustees' building, moved to her estate at Fruitlands in 1920. The Romance of Fiddlers' Green includes advice from a Brother Simeon on planting a Shaker garden that speaks "'the language of the colors'" -- "'white for purity and blue for wisdom," green for "'sympathy,'" and the roses "'by themselves," because they "breathe out love, and naught should mar their perfume, for there's none to equal it'" (quoted in Morse, 263-64).

Greenwood "unnatural" for running to warn the town of a breaking dam and not stopping to collect her own infant first. Esther and her husband are drowned in the ensuing flood, but the child survives, as do the populations of three villages. Still, the women who owe Esther their lives call her conduct "against nature," not only in this incident but also in her remaining "just as fond" of all the "other young ones" in the town "after she had her own" (64).

Gilman's stories show us that variations on conventional motherhood did have their advocates in the world, but Bouve's poem shows the persistence of an attitude that denied authenticity to counter-traditional family bonds, including the Shakers' nonbiological parenting. It may be significant, too, that Bouve's poem celebrating conventional motherhood by contrasting it to Shakerism's "counterfeit" version and her article prophesying the end of Shakerism appeared in the same magazine issue.

Nevertheless, the Outlook's review of Howells's The Vacation of the Kelwyns in the issue for 20 October 1920 speaks of the Shakers as if readers could still be depended on to recognize them; it calls the novel "a finely wrought presentation of American life and character, with interesting sketches of the Shakers and of the reaction of their tenets and practices on the minds of ordinary Americans" (333). However, the Literary Digest for 30 September 1922 portrays the Shaker demise as imminent:

[An] auction sale, in the Shaker community at South Union, Ky., popularly called Shakertown discloses the fact, remarks a reporter from the New York World, that Shakerism, as a picturesque feature of American life, is at the point of extinction. (36).

This observation appears in an article entitled "The Approaching End of the 'Shakers'" (36); A Christian Century article nearly two months later, on 9 November 1922, notes that the "press" is "now recording" the "break-up" of the Shakers, and comments, "Of course. Under the strict practice of celibacy society speedily disappears. When recruits from adult life fail to join them, their colonies are bound to die out" (1383).³

"Yes," affirms Walter Dyer in House Beautiful for May 1929, "the Shakers are dying out," the reason being that their "religious and economic tenets and their adherence to celibacy have militated against them in this twentieth century" (650). So, the reader is urged, "if you own a Shaker chair, preserve it with care, for it will soon be considered an antique, and a rare one at that" (650). The Literary Digest for 6 August 1932 entitles another article "The Last of the Shakers," this time citing a report from the New York Sun about the Mount Lebanon community. The Digest, however, makes no acknowledgement that ten years have passed since its own

³ The Literary Digest for 30 September 1922, quoting the New York World, had noted that "Altho most outside observers attribute the pending fall of Shakerism to their cardinal tenet of celibacy, the elders assign a very different cause -- namely, that the communistic code of living requires too great a sacrifice of personal property to hold converts to who otherwise would be attracted" (36).

previous reporting of the Shakers' approaching end, and that they are still here. Of course, as we remember, Hawthorne had expressed some satisfaction back in 1851 at rumors that the extinction of the sect was "not to be a great many years distant" (Morse 193). By the 1920s, however, thanks in great measure to the interest aroused by Edward Deming Andrews and Faith Andrews, these rumors now included admonitions such as the one in House Beautiful to seek out and hold onto the furniture as "part of our national inheritance" (650), and, of course, a good investment as well.

Novels using Shakers from this time to ours have portrayed them too as a part of our national inheritance. We have already seen that even nineteenth century Shaker fictions were often set in decades previous to their composition and publishing, but The Vacation of the Kelwyns seems to draw the first then-and-now distinction in a Shaker novel, with its subtitle that placed it in "the Middle Eighteen-Seventies." Even Susanna and Sue, for all its elegiac quality, presents a more populated Shaker community with a greater variety of ages represented than in the one Kate Douglas Wiggin visited when working on the manuscript. Robert McCullough's Me and Thee (1937), Ann George Leslie's Dancing Souls (1943), Janice Holt Giles's The Believers (1957), Nancy Zaroulis's Call the Darkness Light (1979), and June Sprigg's story "Rachel: A Fictional Account of a Shaker Woman" (1982) look back to earlier times, incorporate various features of American

history, and reflect what Cate calls a "chief concern" with "the presentation of a comprehensive picture of Shakerism" (24).

This means that the use of historical resources has become part of the prescribed task of fiction writing. June Sprigg, who has done research at Canterbury and is now curator at Hancock, is the author of books on Shaker material culture as well as her story "Rachel".⁴ Giles wrote to Cate on 19 July 1960 that she "did research in original documents, such as diaries, family house journals, manuscripts, etc., of which there are many in the Kentucky Building Library at Bowling Green" (qtd. in Cate 24). Stein credits Giles's novel in particular with contributing to the "rising interest" in Shakers at mid-century (383). The 1976 paperback cover calls The Believers "A Turbulent Saga of the American Frontier and the Love That Defied Age-Old Beliefs Against Unendurable Odds" (Morse 302). In this novel, Rebecca Fowler follows her husband Richard Cooper to the Shakers, but ends up divorcing him and leaving with the non-Shaker schoolteacher Stephen Burke; as in Caroline Lee Hentz's "The Shaker Girl" over a hundred years before, her choice is offered to the reader as affirming not only the marriage narrative but also the American ideal.

We see this affirmation when Rebecca repeats Stephen's

⁴ Her works include By Shaker Hands (1975); Shaker Design, a catalogue to a major Shaker exhibition at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art (1986); and a preface to Don Gifford's edition of Bennet John Lossing's 1857 article for Harper's.

insistent claim that Shakerism is "a withdrawal from life" which cannot be accomplished without "sickening and fading"; America, he has told her, "was established by freedom-loving men and few with the zeal to endure can willingly exchange freedom for safety" (213). ⁵ Rebecca closes the book with the assurance that she wishes the Shakers "no harm," having found the "most devoted of them" to be "good people, as they saw goodness"; her "quarrel with them" has been that their "conception of goodness made no allowance for any other man's," and that, she feels, was a "tyranny" from which she saw "evil come", as "evil comes of all tyranny, for innocence is no guarantor of goodness" (214). A fuller analysis of this novel could pursue Cecilia Macheski's observation on the possible use of Shakerism in this work of historical popular fiction as a locus for projecting Cold War anxieties over tyranny and collectivism.⁶

The novel's equation of escape from tyranny with marriage to the right man also bears further examination. It is significant that on the last page Rebecca plans to destroy the diaries from which she has reconstructed her story for the

⁵ McAdams also discusses The Believers and notes that a sequel, Johnny Osage (1960) treats Rebecca's ongoing adventures and briefly summarizes her Shaker experience (138n18).

⁶ Cecilia Macheski raises these issues in a 1989 Introduction to a reprinting of The Believers by the University of Kentucky Press (ix). While Macheski scrupulously points out features of the novel that appear to give the Shakers a "fair hearing" (xii), she calls the decision to apostasize a return to the "real world" (x).

reader:

Stephen has laughed at my efforts to put down our Shaker experiences. But it is a gentle and indulgent laughter. I have written the last words now, and I shall burn my Journals. The wind of the spirit, free and unburdened, has blown sweetly into my life, and my years with the Shakers have made it even sweeter for me. I have tried to deal justly with the Believers. (214)

Her Shaker life is behind her now, in the ashes of her own written treatment of it and in the book which the reader is now invited to close. The freedom to which she is moving includes being a loving helpmate and frontier wife, who also encourages her husband's efforts as a poet even though she no longer writes herself.⁷ She moves on to the roles of wife and mother, which the Shaker life denied her. Macheski finds in The Believers an argument that the price of the Shaker life is too high for women because it it "includes a rejection of motherhood and sexuality" (x); she also sees the book as an example of women's fiction that represents "Mother Ann Lee's utopia" as "in reality, a man's world" (xi), a point that Procter-Smith, Campbell, and others have also discussed. The world Rebecca exchanges for the Shaker community, however, is still one in which the man's voice is privileged over the woman's.

A novel that seems less concerned with presenting a comprehensive picture of Shakerism is Robert Newton Peck's A

⁷ I am indebted to Renee Fox, archivist at Canterbury Shaker Village, for this insight.

Day No Pigs Would Die, which many secondary school English classes who come on tours to Canterbury are reading. Peck himself called his Shaker references "'only incidental'", though in a 1972 review for the Shaker Quarterly Flo Morse points out, there are "at least thirty references to things Shaker in the 150-page book" (qtd. in Morse 306). The novel takes place in Vermont, where there have been no Shaker communities, and the farm family, though nuclear and conventional, professes to live by Shaker values, including simplicity and integrity. "All this invention in an otherwise wholesome story," says Morse in her review, "caricatures Believers and the true Shaker way"; she goes on to say that while "Shakers have no monopoly on good," still "not all good people are Shakers or have the right to that hallowed name"; and she concludes that most of the "'world's people'" do not know "enough about genuine Shakerism to recognize the errors and opportunism in Mr. Peck's bold characterization of his family as Shakers" (306).

Two more recent novels, Gregory Blake Smith's The Divine Comedy of John Venner (1991) and John Fowles's A Maggot (1985) offer differing Shaker appropriations in current fiction. Smith's book is set in New England in the present and includes features of current Shaker history, including the role of museums in the way the world's people experience, interpret, and finalize the Shakers. Fowles's book is set in England in the early eighteenth century and fictionalizes the origins of

Shakerism. I will discuss Smith's book first because it falls in with the foregoing discussion of such issues as comprehensiveness and opportunism. Fowles's book, in its speculations about the relation of Shakerism to the novel, will then offer some insights which can help us close this study. Smith's title character John Venner, a thirty-five-year old divinity professor at a small New England college, becomes sexually fixated on twenty-three year-old Sabbathday Wells, who was left as a baby at the nearby Shaker village by her counter-culture parents in the 1960s and has been raised by the aging Shaker sisters, now only four in number. Venner is divorced from his wife Sally, a former theology scholar who now calls herself Medusa and is establishing a new identity in an all-female punk rock band. The novel deals with the problem of finding even a sin that is authentic in a modern-day world of junk food, synthetic music, glib language, slack moral standards, and transitory relationships.

Venner has become acquainted with the Shakers through reading in their archives and attending public worship. In his obsession with Sabbathday's virginity, he follows her to the supermarket, secretly photographs her, enters the Dwelling House through a sluice outlet to look at her sleeping, and even steals and reads some of her diaries. From the diaries he learns how at twelve she hated being looked at by visitors "like I'm part of a museum exhibit or something, or sometimes like I'm a toy, a scale model version of a shaker," and hating

the visitors themselves "when they're quiet and reverential like they think I'm contemplating god all the time or something" (60). The novel includes his letters to Mother Ann in which he confesses his fantasies of consummation with Sabbathday in vivid erotic detail.

Through a series of complicated plot developments, he sets himself, unasked, to repair some of the Shaker fences and manages to insinuate himself into the hired men's quarters. When the Eldress dies suddenly, Sabbathday, though the youngest member, takes over as eldress and shows considerable management aptitude. She sees a role for Venner, especially if he continues his teaching and turns over his salary to the society, and an opportunity for marketing both her weaving and a reconstructed Shaker image through a gallery called Idols and Icons, Inc. (238). Her ongoing interaction with Venner, beyond her initial anger at his stalking, eventually reveals her own curiosity about sex, and about being "'loved personally'" -- having someone come to her "'out of choice'" (219) instead of through what Venner as narrator calls the "ideologically dictated" love of the sisters for her (219). The novel does not, however, go into the issue of how much personal or 'partial love' may also be ideologically dictated.

I do not propose an in-depth analysis of The Divine Comedy of John Venner for this study. The novel is interesting, however, as a commentary on a mainstream culture so superficial that Shakerism is presented as authentic in

comparison almost by default. It also incorporates voices from Dante, modern advertising, rock music, and talk-show repartee, and it touches on issues of Shaker internal politics, including not-so-veiled references to the disagreement between Canterbury and Sabbathday Lake over taking in new members. It also sends Sabbathday on a poignant search to New York for the biological mother who abandoned her long ago.

The relationship of Venner and Sabbathday, however, ultimately appropriates Shakerism into a seduction plot that, while it decenters conventional marriage, remains preoccupied with a self-absorbed and transitory version of sexual pursuit. This preoccupation may be offered in this novel as one of the late twentieth century's problematic variations on the marriage narrative: it seeks liberation from the constraints of social institutions and prescribed gender roles, but it also eludes commitment. At the same time, such a preoccupation cannot accommodate a committed life choice that dismisses compulsory sexuality.⁸

⁸ Butler uses the term "compulsory heterosexuality" (ix) to signify an assumption of the centrality of a so-called natural heterosexual outlook and identity and specific heterosexual behaviors. It rules out other sexualities -- specifically as applied to same-sex relationships -- as authentic alternatives. Rich urges that "compulsory heterosexuality" has made "lesbian existence" (emphasis hers) an "unrecognized and unaffirmed claiming by women of their sexuality" (248). The major contrast evoked by the term "compulsory heterosexuality" is thus between opposite-sex (valid, existing) and same-sex (invalid, non-existent) relationships. Homosexuality is not a theme or an issue in The Divine Comedy of John Venner, however, and by extending

We are not given the final moments of the seduction scene between Venner and Sabbathday, and Venner as narrator warns us as readers to "think again" (220) if we are expecting them. His two-page soliloquy in this scene does touch on the question of conscience: "Because even," he asks himself, "if the degradation of the last Shakeress is inevitable, does Venner have to be the instrument of that degradation?" (221). The remainder of the account answers the question only implicitly, and the novel ends, some forty pages after this incident, when Venner and Sally have just watched Sabbathday on David Letterman's show.

In the one-upping talk-show banter of the exchange between Letterman and Sabbathday, there is certainly a parody on one of the characteristic languages, as well as on some of the sexual attitudes, of the late twentieth century. Letterman is made to marvel that Sabbathday really is, "'how shall I say this -- a virgin?'" To his, "'But you're, let's be honest, a beautiful woman,'" she replies, "'Thank you. So was our Mother Ann'" (260-61). What is disappointing about this novel, however, is that no genuineness is counter-poised to the often-entertaining parody; nothing in the novel seriously suggests that a woman could remain a virgin by choice.

the term to "compulsory sexuality" I am re-directing this contrast. Thus, the contrast I hope to underscore by the use of the term "compulsory sexuality" is between sexuality (construed as heterosexual in this novel) and celibacy, which this novel cannot accept as an authentic counter-traditional sexual identity.

Venner's narrator closes the story with a lyrical tribute to "all those who dreamt a life of heaven on earth and work to find they were only human" (268). The novel's definition of human, however, dwells heavily on limitations and inconsistencies. It would be far more parodic, far more subversive and heretical, to suggest that it is humanly possible even today not only to commit oneself to an affirming and liberating celibacy but also to follow Mother Ann's injunction to "be what you seem, and seem to be what you are."

In emphasizing dissidence among the Shakers and a sister's ambivalence toward celibacy, Smith could be demonstrating accord with the position also articulated by Stein (their books came out the same year) that the "story of the Believers is all the more engaging when they are viewed in their full humanity" (430). Stein asserts that the United Society "has an unusual, even remarkable, record of achievements" and "does not need to be sentimentalized or romanticized" (430), and Smith certainly does take on the sentimentalizing and romanticizing of Shakers in this novel. However, Smith portrays us as most human when we argue, or lapse from our principles (in thought or in deed), or behave self-servingly and hypocritically. In so doing, he makes "humanizing" the Shakers into one more finalizing scheme that absolves writer and reader from having to carry any thought of Shakerism's real subversive capacity beyond the novel's closing pages. Thus, in DuPlessis's terms, he fails to write

beyond the ending.

John Fowles's Shaker novel is more open-ended. Fowles is imagining the Shakers in the period before their sentimentalizing and romanticizing by the public, and even before their journey to America. In fact, A Maggot ends with the birth of Ann Lee. It aims at comprehensiveness in portraying the spirit of Shakerism rather than in recounting the facts of its past: one of its many liberties with history is to give Ann Lee's mother a name and a past of her own. The name is Rebecca Hocknell (niece of John Hocknell who accompanied Ann Lee to America), though her first name, we are told, was originally Fanny, and her past was as a prostitute. Fanny (who becomes Rebecca) is hired by a young lord to assume a role in a complex staged plot to cover his disappearance from his home on what is eventually revealed to be a visionary quest. Fanny/ Rebecca's role in the charade is as a lady's maid for a fiancée the young lord is ostensibly going to meet.

The novel alternates between the execution of the young lord's scheme itself and an elaborate inquest after he disappears. In the course of events, Fanny becomes pregnant in a tender relationship with the lord's deaf and dumb manservant, who also functions as his sexual alter-ego. Fanny's renaming as Rebecca comes about in a vision that encompasses father-and-son figures in carpenter's clothes, a female trinity in silver garments, and Holy Mother Wisdom, who is later identified as the Shakers' female God-head -- to be

revealed over a century later, beyond the scope of this novel, as "endless love truth, meekness, long forbearance and loving kindness" ⁹ The episode of the vision is the point at which the young lord disappears from the story; we also learn that the young manservant has hanged himself. Rebecca becomes affiliated with the Wardleys' society and marries a blacksmith named John Lee before her child is born. Thus the conception of Ann Lee is presented in a complex fusion of natural and supernatural happenings.

The "maggot" in the title has several referents. In the Prologue, we are told it is the "larval stage of a winged creature, as is the written text, at least in the writer's hope," and that in an "older though now obsolete sense of the word" it is a "whim or quirk"; it is also a generic name for some dance tunes of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Fowles tells us that this novel as a "fictional maggot" grew, like one of these dance tunes, "out of obsession with a theme." The theme was an image that came to Fowles of a group of travellers moving across a horizon who later become the assembled players in the young lord's scheme, and the resulting novel is thus a maggot (appropriately called A

⁹ These "words of Holy Wisdom" are from the Appendix to Paulina Bates, The Divine Book of Holy Wisdom (1849). See also (in particular) Dorothy Ann Durgin's "A Roll of Solemn Warning, By Holy and Eternal Mother Wisdom, Brought by her Witnessing Angel" in Philemon Stewart's Sacred Roll and Book (261-63) and The Youth's Guide in Zion and Holy Mother's Promises, Given By Inspiration at New Lebanon, N.Y., January 5, 1842.

Maggot) as a written text, a repetition and variation on a theme, a whim or quirk of the author, and the larval stage of a revelatory experience for writer and reader.

A Maggot deserves a more detailed analysis than can be offered here. However, as a fictional treatment both of the origins of Shakerism and of the writing and rewriting of experience, it offers a valuable perspective on the relation of Shakerism to the worldly novel genre. Fowles admits in the novel's epilogue that he consulted no books or documents, and that Ann Lee's believed historical date of birth differs from the one in his novel. He respects "exact and scrupulously documented history," but sees this "exacting discipline" as "essentially a science, and immensely different in its aims and methods from those of fiction" (461).

Nevertheless, though a "committed atheist," he claims to have written A Maggot partly from "a very considerable affection and sympathy" for the Shakers (462). "Something in Shaker thought and theology," he writes in the same epilogue,

(not least in its holding that a Holy Trinity that has no female component cannot be holy), in its strange rituals and marvelously inventive practical life, in its richly metaphorical language and imaginative use of dancing and music, has always seemed to me to adumbrate the relation of fiction to reality. We novelists also demand a far-fetched faith, quite often seemingly absurd in relation to normal reality; we too need a bewildering degree of metaphorical understanding from our readers before the truths behind our tropes can be conveyed. (462-63)

Stein cites this parallel, observing that "in a strange way, Fowles seems to have caught the uniqueness of Shakerism"

-- its particular fusion of structuring and liberation --
"more accurately than have many of the friends and patrons of
the society" (431) who gloss over its dissonances and
constrictions. Fowles is especially intrigued by what he sees
as Ann Lee's "thorough-going" and "practical vision of what
was wrong with the world" and the Shakers' "aspiration" or

determination to escape mere science, mere reason,
convention, established belief and religion, into
the one thing that excuses an escape from such
powerful social gods, the founding of a more humane
society ... [:] all that is conveyed in 'more
love'. (465)

What Fowles sees as the "almost divine maggot" (467) of
Mother Ann's message is its persistent "refusal to believe
what those in power would have us believe" -- about theology
and doctrine, about property, about matter-and-spirit, about
sexuality, about gender (466). This refusal, implicit in
Shaker belief and practice, to accept the tenets of the
"orthodox" -- theologians, priests, capitalists, communists,
sensualists,¹⁰ or males (462) -- and also in an even more
comprehensive "refusal to die" (462), makes Shakerism continue
to act upon Fowles's novelizing imagination. It may be this
very refusal by Shakerism -- either to accept the orthodoxies
of mainstream power groups or to disappear in the face of them
-- that continues to act on authors who are trying to

¹⁰ John Venner is a good example of an orthodox
sensualist, and while he should not be confused with his
author, The Divine Comedy of John Venner, as already noted,
offers no alternative to a compulsory centering of sexuality
in experience and identity.

stabilize their images of the world, and who find that Shakerism subverts some of their own tenets and orthodoxies.

One of Fowles's main characters, a lawyer named Ayscough who is employed by the young lord's father to investigate the son's disappearance, experiences this refusal. Part of his function is to take depositions from the other characters, including Rebecca. In listening to her narrative, he feels that she is "nine parts hiding truth in her holier vision"; nevertheless, the narrator tells us, there "remains an irreducible one part, of possible truth, he cannot quell. He will never reveal it, yet there it sticks, a nagging thorn in his side" (419). This irreducible one part of Shakerism -- the part that both attracts and resists the outsider's attempts at appropriating and authoring, and that acts as a thorn in flesh and text alike -- may be what has prompted writers for over a hundred years to martial such a range of textual strategies, reconstructive devices, and finalizing schemes in their attempts to contain Shakerism in their fictions. It may also be what made the Shakers act on Howells as "a lure, a torment, a solace, and a reproach" (Firkins 94).

We may hope that this same irreducible one part will also lead future authors, whether or not they produce written texts, to recognize that Shakerism in past and present can serve as a trope for something more than denial and sterility, or for a sentimentalized utopia, or for a doomed idealism, or even for a flawed but aspiring humanity. It may also stand for

a counter-traditional reality, enacted off the page in an authentic alternative life, and re-enacted on the page in a new and liberating interplay of plots and voices.

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